

The Characterization of Jesus
in the Book of Hebrews

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By
Brian C. Small



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PREFACE

This monograph represents a revision of my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Religion at Baylor University in the spring semester of 2012. The idea for this project was first conceived in Dr. Mikeal Parson's fall 2006 seminar, "Characterization in Ancient Rhetoric and Contemporary Literary Criticism." My seminar paper explored the topic lists of the person in the rhetorical handbooks of Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* and Cicero's *De inventione*. Utilizing their topic lists I developed a taxonomy by which one could gain insight into the author of Hebrews' conception of Jesus' character. A revised version of that paper appeared as "The Use of Rhetorical *Topoi* in the Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews" in the Spring 2010 issue of *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (volume 37, number 1) under the editorial direction of Dr. Eric Mason. That article represents my initial foray into the study of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. I am thankful to Eric Mason for accepting my article for inclusion in that special issue on "emerging voices on the Epistle to the Hebrews" and to Mikeal Parsons, journal editor, for giving me permission to incorporate the substance of that article into this monograph.

My doctoral dissertation, "The Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews," was a considerable revision and expansion of that article. Mikeal Parsons was the natural choice to serve as my mentor for the dissertation. I am thankful for his guidance for improving the dissertation. Naturally, any shortcomings in the work are fully my own responsibility. I am also grateful to Dr. Lidija Novakovic and Dr. Jeffrey Hamilton for serving on my dissertation committee, and to Dr. Bruce Longenecker and Dr. William Bellinger for serving on my oral defense committee. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Charles Talbert, who originally was slated to serve on my dissertation committee but unfortunately was unable to continue in that capacity. I have learned much from them, and from other professors and fellow graduate students of the Baylor Department of Religion.

Since the completion of my dissertation, I have been able to do some additional reading and reflection. Consequently, I have been able to incorporate some additional material, along with a number of editorial emendations and corrections, into the original dissertation. I am thankful to Dr. Paul Anderson, series editor, for accepting my monograph for inclusion in Brill's prestigious Biblical Interpretation Series.

The completion of my doctoral degree signaled the culmination of a long academic journey which began at Asbury College (now University) and continued at Asbury Theological Seminary, the University of Kentucky, and Princeton Theological Seminary. I am indebted to my professors—too numerous to name here—for teaching me about the biblical texts, ancient languages, and the Greco-Roman world, and for preparing me for my doctoral work at Baylor University.

My life's journey has included the privilege of serving several United Methodist churches in Kentucky and eastern Pennsylvania. I appreciate my former parishioners, as well as my friends at First United Methodist Church in Waco, Texas, where I found a church home. They have given me encouragement and now celebrate with me in my accomplishments.

Finally, I want to express my greatest appreciation to my family: to my biggest fan, my mother Susan, who has lovingly supported me during my years in graduate school, and to my Aunt Sally and Uncle Kurt for helping me tremendously, and to my grandmother Laura, who did not live to see this day but who would have been immensely proud of my achievements. I could not have completed this monumental task without their encouragement and support.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIBLE TEXTS AND VERSIONS

ESV	English Standard Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

JOURNALS, PERIODICALS, REFERENCE WORKS, AND SERIES

A&C	<i>Affirmation and Critique</i>
AAAbO.H	Acta Academiae Aboensis, Series A: Humaniora
AB	Anchor Bible
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
ACR	<i>Australasian Catholic Record</i>
AJBA	<i>Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology</i>
AJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
ALBO	Analecta Iovaniensia biblica et orientalia
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries

<i>AsTJ</i>	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
AUS.TR	American University Studies, Series 7: Theology and Religion
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 2d ed. Chicago, 1979
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 1961
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BerO	Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibLeb</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
BibT	Bibliothèque théologique
<i>Bijdr</i>	<i>Bijdragen</i>
BINS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BST	Basel Studies of Theology
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
CC	Continental Commentaries
CEB	Commentaire évangélique de la Bible
CFTL	Clark's Foreign Theological Library

<i>Chm</i>	<i>Churchman</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CQR</i>	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
CsBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical Weekly</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Etude bibliques</i>
EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET. Grand Rapids, 1990–1993
EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>EsprVie</i>	<i>Esprit et vie</i>
ETB	Evangelisch-Theologische Bibliothek
EUS.T	European University Studies, Series 23: Theology
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FgNt</i>	<i>Filologia neotestamentaria</i>
<i>FM</i>	<i>Faith and Mission</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GNTE	Guides to New Testament Exegesis
<i>GR</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
HCNT	Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament
Herm	Hermeneia
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>

IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ILBS	Indiana Literary Biblical Series
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITL	International Theological Library
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBMW	<i>Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JOTT	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism: Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio divina
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LTJ</i>	<i>Lutheran Theological Journal</i>
<i>MelT</i>	<i>Melita theologica</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MNTS	McMaster New Testament Studies
MTS	Marburger Theologische Studien
MThS.H	Münchener Theologische Studien 1. Historische Abteilung
NAC	New American Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NESTTR</i>	<i>Near East School of Theology Theological Review</i>
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICNOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1975–1985

NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBS	The Oxford Bible Series
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SBFA	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLAcBib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLWGRW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SFEG	Schriften der finnischen exegetischen Gesellschaft
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplement to <i>Numen</i>)
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>SPhA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>

<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>StBibT</i>	<i>Studia biblica et theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StPatr	Studia Patristica
StPB	Studia Post-Biblica
Str-B	Strack, H. L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922–1961
StudNeot	Studia neotestamentica
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
TExH	Theologische Existenz heute
<i>ThBer</i>	<i>Theologische Berichte</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TLNT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> . C. Spicq. Translated and edited by J. D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass., 1994
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TRu</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TSK</i>	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
<i>TTE</i>	<i>The Theological Educator</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>VD</i>	<i>Verbum domini</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WeBC	Westminster Bible Companion
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WSB	Wuppertaler Studienbibel
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The writing commonly known as the “Epistle to the Hebrews” is every bit as mysterious as the Melchizedek figure it describes as “without father, without mother, without genealogy” (7:3).¹ Indeed, the circumstances surrounding its composition (i.e., its authorship, recipients, date, occasion etc.) remain completely shrouded in obscurity. Moreover, other aspects such as its literary genre, structure, usage of Israel’s Scriptures,² background of thought, and theology remain highly contested subjects within the field of biblical studies.³

What is not so mysterious, however, is the prominent role that the figure of Jesus plays in the overall presentation of the book. While God is the first figure one encounters, one quickly realizes that Jesus is the main subject of the opening prologue (1:1–4). Jesus remains the central focus of the book in the opening chapters (1:5–3:6) and he features prominently in the central argument of the book (4:14–5:10; 7:1–10:18). Even in the sections of the book where Jesus is not the main topic, his name repeatedly appears throughout the discourse (3:14; 6:1, 20; 10:19–20; 12:2–3, 24; 13:8, 13–14). Finally, Jesus appears conspicuously in the closing benediction of the book (13:20–21).

¹ All translations will be taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

² On occasion the designation “Old Testament” (OT) will be used as a matter of convenience to refer to Israel’s Scriptures. Naturally, the author of Hebrews would not have identified Israel’s Scriptures in this way.

³ Useful surveys on the modern history of interpretation on Hebrews can be found in: Erich Grässer, “Der Hebräerbrief 1938–1963,” *TRu* 30 (1964): 138–236; George Wesley Buchanan, “The Present State of Scholarship on Hebrews,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Part One: New Testament. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 299–330; J. C. McCullough, “Some Recent Developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *IBS* 2 (1980): 141–65; 3 (1981): 28–43; idem, “Hebrews in Recent Scholarship,” *IBS* 16 (1994): 66–86, 108–20; Craig R. Koester, “The Epistle to the Hebrews in Recent Study,” *CurBS* 2 (1994): 123–45; idem, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 19–64; George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews in Its First-Century Contexts: Recent Research,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (eds. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 414–443; Daniel J. Harrington, *What Are They Saying about the Letter to the Hebrews?* (New York: Paulist, 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE CHRISTOLOGY OF HEBREWS

It will come as no surprise, then, that the scholarly literature on the Christology of Hebrews is voluminous.⁴ Many studies situate Hebrews' Christology within its larger theological framework.⁵ Two of the more recent monographs are representative of the approaches taken towards the theology of Hebrews. Mathias Rissi takes a systematic approach. After an introductory chapter dealing with the situation of the audience, he organizes his presentation around seven topics: the image of God, the heavenly world, Christology, the effects of salvation, the church, and eschatology.⁶ His chapter on Christology is further subdivided into nine topics: Son, high priest, incarnation, the service of the high priest on earth, the significance of the death of Jesus, the perfection of Christ, his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, the priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and the future of Christ.⁷ Barnabas Lindars takes a less systematic approach. After an initial chapter on the historical setting of Hebrews, his chapter on theology basically treats topics as they emerge in the course of a sequential reading of Hebrews. For instance, in the first subsection entitled "The Foundation in the Primitive Kerygma" he deals with the preexistence of Jesus, Jesus the Messiah, Jesus and the angels, and the humanity of Jesus.⁸

⁴ Surveys on the history of interpretation of Christology in Hebrews can be found in: Grässer, "Hebräerbrief," 214–23; Andreas Stadelmann, "Zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes in der neueren discussion," *ThBer* 2 (1973): 135–221; and Helmut Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (EdF 228; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 65–82. These surveys cover only a portion of the vast literature on the Christology of Hebrews.

⁵ Some of the more prominent treatments of the theology of Hebrews include: Eduard Karl Aug. Riehm, *Der Lehrbegriff des Hebräerbriefes dargestellt und mit verwandten Lehrbegriffen verglichen* (Ludwigsburg: Ferd. Riehm, 1858); Eugène Ménégoz, *La théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1894); George Milligan, *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: With a Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1899); E. F. Scott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1922); William Leonard, *Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Critical Problem and Use of the Old Testament* (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1939), 45–106; Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956); Mathias Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser* (WUNT 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); and Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Space does not permit the listing of the numerous NT Theologies which also have sections on the theology of Hebrews.

⁶ Rissi, *Theologie*.

⁷ Rissi, *Theologie*, 45–91.

⁸ Lindars, *Theology*, 26–42.

Lindars concludes with two briefer chapters on Hebrews and the NT and the significance of Hebrews for today.⁹

A host of articles, dissertations, and monographs have concentrated upon the topic of Christology generally, while numerous other studies have narrowed the focus to such themes as Jesus' divinity, his preexistence, his incarnation and humanity, his death, his resurrection and exaltation, his role as high priest, his titles, and various other aspects related to the Christology of Hebrews.¹⁰ Naturally, Christology also figures prominently in numerous studies and commentaries whose focus is not entirely on Christology.

Scholars approach the Christology of Hebrews with a variety of methodologies. Perhaps the most common approach is what may be termed the *descriptive* approach. This approach simply uses the basic tools of exegesis to describe the Christology of Hebrews. These approaches often organize their presentation around theological motifs as noted in the examples above.

⁹ Lindars, *Theology*, 119–42.

¹⁰ Listed here are only some of the most important monographs on Christology from the twentieth century onwards. Space limitations prevent a listing of all the articles, dissertations, and commentaries that deal with Christology in some manner. Harris Lachlan MacNeill, *The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Including Its Relation to the Developing Christology of the Primitive Church* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1914); Alexander Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915); Harm Henry Meeter, *The Heavenly High Priesthood of Christ: An Exegetico-Dogmatic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans-Sevensma, 1916); Friedrich Büchsel, *Die Christologie des Hebräerbriefs* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1922); Joseph Ungeheuer, *Der grosse Priester über dem Hause Gottes: Die Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (Würzburg: H. Stürtz, 1939); Heinrich Zimmerman, *Die Hohepriester-Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1964); Keijo Nissilä, *Das Hohepriestermotiv im Hebräerbrief: Eine exegetische Untersuchung* (SFEG; Helsinki: Oy Liiton Kirjapaino, 1979); Franz Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung: Die paränetische Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (BU 15; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1980); William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981); James Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps 110,4 and the Substructure of Heb 5,1–7,28* (EUS.T 693; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000); David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (Studies in Biblical Literature 21; New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Sebastian Fuhrmann, *Vergeben und Vergessen: Christologie und Neuer Bund im Hebräerbrief* (WMANT 113; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukircher, 2007); Angela Rascher, *Schriftauslegung und Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 153; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Eric F. Mason, "You Are a Priest Forever": *Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (STDJ 74; Leiden: Brill, 2008); Kevin B. McCrudden, *Solidarity Perfected: Beneficent Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BZNW 159; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2/338; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); R. J. McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2013).

The strength of descriptive approaches is that they try to describe the Christology of Hebrews on its own terms. A descriptive approach by itself, however, can be inadequate since the author of Hebrews often does not define his terminology. For example, when the author describes Jesus as the ἀπαύγασμα of God's glory (1:3) or as the ἀρχηγός (2:10; 12:2), or the "great shepherd of the sheep" (13:20), he does not explain what he means by these designations. Clearly, the author and his audience share a common language of discourse that is assumed by the author when composing his work. Interpreters who are removed from Hebrews' thought world in terms of time, place, and culture will have to draw upon other methodological approaches to understand more fully the author's depiction of Jesus.

Quite common are *traditionsgeschichtliche* and *religionsgeschichtliche* approaches which seek to discern literary and/or religious influences on the thought world of Hebrews.¹¹ William R. G. Loader's *Sohn und Hoherpriester* represents one *traditionsgeschichtliche* approach. His study is divided into two parts that are focused on the two most prominent designations for Jesus in Hebrews: Son and high priest. In the first part he notes tensions in the presentation of Jesus as Son. On the one hand, there are passages that speak of Jesus' appointment to Sonship after his exaltation (e.g., 1:5, 13; 5:5). On the other hand, there are those passages that speak of Jesus' eternal Sonship, preexistence, and role in creation (e.g., 1:3, 10–12; 3:1–6). Likewise, in part two he identifies tensions in the presentation of Jesus as high priest. On the one hand, there are passages which seem to speak of his obtaining the office of high priest after his exaltation (2:17; 5:6–10; 6:20). On the other hand, there are passages which seem to indicate that Jesus acted as high priest on earth, particularly with his self-

¹¹ These two methodologies often overlap and so works exemplifying these approaches are included together here: Ménégos, *Théologie*; MacNeill, *Christology*; Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); Zimmerman, *Hohepriester-Christologie*; idem, *Das Bekenntnis der Hoffnung: Tradition und Redaktion im Hebräerbrief* (BBB 47; Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1977); Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (SNT 2; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1969); Gareth Lee Cockerill, "The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1–28" (Th.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1976); Ronald H. Nash, "The Notion of Mediator in Alexandrian Judaism and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *WTJ* 40 (1977): 89–115; idem, "The Book of Hebrews: A Test Case," in *The Gospel and the Greeks: Did the New Testament Borrow from Pagan Thought?* (Richardson, Tex.: Probe Books, 1991), 89–112, 279–89; Laub, *Bekenntnis*; Loader, *Sohn*; Rissi, *Theologie*; Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, *Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion* (NTOA 53; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Mason, *Priest Forever*.

sacrifice (9:14, 26). Loader finds the explanation for these tensions in the fact that the author has utilized divergent traditions and combined them in his portrayal of Jesus.

Scholars using the *traditionsgeschichtliche* approach frequently claim to detect traces of testimonia/florilegia, confessions, and/or hymns underlying important christological passages in Hebrews. James Rendall Harris was the first to argue that the use of testimonia lies behind the catena of Scripture quotations in Hebrews 1:5–13.¹² He has been followed to some degree by other scholars.¹³ This proposal seems to have found confirmation with the discovery of testimonia and florilegia among the Qumran scrolls.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this thesis has largely been called into question.¹⁵

¹² James Rendall Harris, "Testimonies in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Testimonies* (vol. 2; Cambridge: University Press, 1920), 43–50.

¹³ E.g., F. C. Syngé, *Hebrews and the Scriptures* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), 3–6, 53–54; Ceslas Spicq, "L'Épître aux Hébreux, Apollos, Jean-Baptiste, les Hellénistes et Qumran," *RevQ* 1 (1959): 384; Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (HNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1964), 43–44; Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews: A Comparison of the Interpretation of the Old Testament in Philo Judaeus and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BST 1; Richmond: John Knox, 1965), 84–88; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (BU 4; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1968), 43–45; Theissen, *Untersuchungen*; George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions* (AB 36; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), XXIII; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 38–39; Larry R. Helyer, "The *Prōtokos* Title in Hebrews," *StBibT* 6 (1976): 5; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Herm; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 50–51; Annang Asumang, *Unlocking the Book of Hebrews: A Spatial Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 88.

¹⁴ E.g., *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174) and *4QTestimonia* (4Q175).

¹⁵ E.g., Leonard, *Authorship*, 352–53; Charles Harold Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1953), 26–27; Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. Van Soest, 1961), 91–92; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 43–45; C. F. Evans, *The Theology of Rhetoric: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Dr. William's Trust, 1988), 13; Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 164; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 109–110; Gert Jacobus Steyn, "Psalm 2 in Hebrews," *Neot* 37 (2003): 270–72; Radu Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews: An Investigation of Its Influence with Special Consideration to the Use of Hab 2:3–4 in Heb 10:37–38* (WUNT 2/160; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 37; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 65–66n130. Similarities between Heb 1:5–14 and 1 Clem 36:1–6 have prompted some scholars to surmise a common liturgical tradition behind both writings; see Käsemann, *Wandering*, 170–72; Theissen, *Untersuchungen*, 34–37; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (12th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 29. It is more likely, however, that 1 Clement is dependent on Hebrews; see Gareth Lee Cockerill, "Heb 1:1–14, 1 Clem 36:1–6 and the High Priest Title," *JBL* 97 (1978): 437–40; William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 1:26.

While some of the quotations (from Ps 2:7 and 110:1) were in usage in early Christian tradition, the particular combination of Scripture quotations seems to be unique to Hebrews. Moreover, the use of literary devices such as inclusio, chiasm, and antithesis points to a passage that has been carefully constructed by the author. It seems more likely that the catena was the author's own construction.

More popular is the detection of early Christian confessions or hymns underlying significant christological passages (1:1–4; 2:9–10; 4:14–16; 5:7–10; 7:1–3, 26–28; 12:1–2).¹⁶ Features such as christological emphasis, distinctive vocabulary, use of participial and relative clauses, use of parallelism, and other stylistic features have led scholars to discern hymn texts behind some or all of these passages. However, other scholars have criticized such attempts to find hymn texts behind these passages.¹⁷ First, some scholars

¹⁶ E.g., Günther Bornkamm, "Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief," in *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum* (BEvT 28; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1959), 197–200; Gottfried Schille, "Erwägungen zur Hohepriesterlehre des Hebräerbriefes," *ZNW* 46 (1955): 81–87, 97–98; Gerhard Friedrich, "Das Lied vom Hohenpriester im Zusammenhang von Hebr. 4,14–5,10," *TZ* 18 (1962): 99–107; Ulrich Luck, "Himmliches und irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief," *NovT* 6 (1963): 200; Gottfried Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965), 38, 42–43; Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (SUNT 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 137–40; Theodor Lescow, "Jesus in Gethsemane bei Lukas und im Hebräerbrief," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 215–39; Egon Brandenburger, "Text und Vorlagen von Hebr. V,7–10: Ein Beitrag zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes," *NovT* 11 (1969): 190–224; Theissen, *Untersuchungen*, 20–25; Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical and Religious Background* (SNTSMS 15; Cambridge: University Press, 1971), 19–20, 92–94; Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972), 166–70, 175–79; Helyer "Protokos," 4–5; Otfried Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms* (WUNT 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1976), 75–102; Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 118; Martin Hengel, "Hymns and Christology," in *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 84; Zimmerman, *Bekenntnis*, 52–99; Estella Ruth Boggs Horning, "Hymns in Hebrews: A Formal and Christological Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1983); David Alan Black, "Note on the Structure of Hebrews 12,1–2," *Bib* 68 (1987): 547–50; Hugolinus Langkammer, "Jesus in der Sprache der neutestamentlichen Christuslieder," in *Von Urchristentum zu Jesus: Für Joachim Gnika* (eds. Hubert Frankemölle and Karl Kertelge; Freiberg: Herder, 1989), 476; Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 275–82; idem, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007), 99–103, 106–8; Victor C. Pfitzner, "Where Tradition and Context Meet: The Christology of Hebrews as Theological Paradigm," in *God Down Under: Theology in the Antipodes* (eds. Winifred Wing Han Lamb and Ian Barns; ATF Series 10; Adelaide, Australia: ATF, 2003), 72–74; Aitken, *Jesus' Death*, 144–45.

¹⁷ E.g., Thorleif Boman, "Der Gebetskampf Jesu," *NTS* 10 (1963–1964): 266; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 142; D. W. B. Robinson, "The Literary Structure of Hebrews 1:1–4," *AJBA* 1 (1972):

who see hymnic sources behind some texts reject any hymnic sources behind others.¹⁸ Second, proponents for the hymn-texts theory have difficulty demarcating the actual boundaries of the putative hymn texts and they often differ in their reconstructions of the supposed *Vorlage* lying behind them. Third, the style and themes addressed in these passages are consistent with the rest of the book. The author of Hebrews was certainly capable of writing elevated prose, so it seems more likely that these passages are the author's own constructions. Furthermore, it should be noted that, even if the author did use such traditional materials, he has appropriated and adapted them for his own purposes in the construction of his argument. This is most clearly seen in the way the author has appropriated the source material that he has undoubtedly used: Israel's Scriptures.

Religionsgeschichtliche approaches have sought to identify the religious background that influenced the thought world of Hebrews.¹⁹ The religious background of Hebrews has been variously identified as Platonism/Philonism, Gnosticism, Qumran sectarianism or Essenism, apocalyptic Judaism, merkabah mysticism, Samaritanism, and/or mystery religions.²⁰

178–86; Janusz Frankowski, "Early Christian Hymns Recorded in the New Testament: A Reconsideration of the Question in the Light of Heb 1,3," *BZ* 27 (1983): 183–94; John P. Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1,5–14," *Bib* 66 (1985): 524–28; David Alan Black, "Hebrews 1:1–4: A Study in Discourse Analysis," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 186; Samuel Bénétreau, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; CEB; Vaux-sur-Seine: EDIFAC, 1989–1990), 1:62; Lane, *Hebrews*, cxli, 1:112–13, 160; Daniel J. Ebert, "The Chiastic Structure of the Prologue to Hebrews," *TJ* 13 (1992): 176; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 97–98; Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* (NABPR Dissertation Series 10; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1994), 210–11; Koester, *Hebrews*, 179, 349–50; Eric F. Mason, "Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus," *BR* 50 (2005): 46; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (SP 13; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 44–45; James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 33.

¹⁸ Attridge, for example, thinks that apart from 1:3 the case for hymn texts behind other passages is weak (*Hebrews*, 201151). Likewise, Deichgräber detects a hymn behind 1:3 but rejects any hymn sources behind 5:5–10, 7:1–3, or 7:26–28 (*Gotteshymnus*, 174–78).

¹⁹ The history of interpretation on this matter has been well rehearsed. Parsons has a nice overview in his article, "Son and High Priest: A Study in the Christology of Hebrews," *EvQ* 60 (1988): 195–216. For a more thorough survey and critique, see Lincoln Douglas Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Other surveys can be found in Grässer, "Hebräerbrief," 167–86; McCullough, "Recent Developments," 142–51; idem, "Recent Scholarship," 72–77; Feld, *Hebräerbrief*, 35–51; Lane, *Hebrews*, ciii–cx; Koester, *Hebrews*, 59–63; Guthrie, "First-Century Contexts," 425–29.

²⁰ *Platonism/Philonism*: Ménégos revived interest in Philo as the conceptual background for Hebrews' thought. He argued that the author was a convert from Philonism (*Théologie*, 197–219). In the first half of the twentieth century, it was almost taken for granted that Hebrews was influenced by Philo/Alexandrianism; see, for example: Milligan,

The quest for a single, monolithic background for the thought world of Hebrews has been largely unsuccessful. Hurst concludes his survey and critique with the following words:

Theology, 203–7; George Holley Gilbert, “The Greek Element in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *AJT* 14 (1910): 521–32; MacNeill, *Christology*, 107–8; Scott, *Hebrews*, 50–53; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), xxxi–xxxiv. Such views reached their pinnacle in the work of Spicq, who in a series of articles and in his magisterial commentary compared the vocabulary, style, exegetical techniques, ideas, and psychology of Philo and Hebrews and concluded that the author was a Philonian converted to Christianity; see “Alexandrinismes dan l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *RB* 58 (1951): 481–502; “Le Philonisme de l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *RB* 56 (1949): 542–72; 57 (1950): 212–42; *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; *EBib*; Paris: Gabalda, 1952–1953), 39–91. Ronald Williamson subjected Spicq’s thesis to a detailed analysis and concluded that the “Writer of Hebrews had never been a Philonist, had never read Philo’s works, had never come under the influence of Philo directly or indirectly”; see *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ALGHJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 579. Hurst is also highly critical of this view (*Hebrews*, 7–42). Ronald H. Nash argues that Hebrews employs Philonic/Platonic terminology but in fact is exposing the inadequacy of this belief system (“Notion of Mediator”; “The Book of Hebrews”).

Gnosticism: Some scholars have argued that Hebrews was written to refute a form of Gnosticism; see, for example, Richard Perdelwitz, “Das literarische Problem des Hebräerbriefs,” *ZNW* 11 (1910): 59–78, 105–23; T. W. Manson, “The Problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *BJRL* 32 (1949): 1–17; Alfred C. Vansant, “The Humanity of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews” (Th.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1951), 175–90. Käsemann famously argued for the influence of Gnosticism in his influential book, *Wandering People of God*. His thesis was largely supported by Theissen, *Untersuchungen*, and Erich Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief* (MTS 2; Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1965). Käsemann anachronistically applied Gnostic literature to Hebrews. He is critiqued by Otfried Hofius in *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (WUNT 11; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970); and *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19 f. und 10,19 f.* (WUNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972).

Qumran Sectarianism/Essenism: Yigael Yadin noted affinities between Hebrews and the Qumran scrolls regarding the eschatological role of angels, the priestly Messiah, the eschatological prophet or new Moses, and the pentateuchal subject matter. He concluded that Hebrews was written to converts from the Dead Sea Scrolls sect; see “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Scripta Hierosolymitana. Volume IV: Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), 36–55. David Flusser in the same volume also noted various other affinities; see “The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity,” in *Scripta Hierosolymitana. Volume IV: Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), 237–48. Ceslas Spicq argued that Apollos had written to ex-Essene priests who opposed the temple but still held on to their veneration of angels, Moses, and the Levitical priesthood (“Apollos”). Hans Kosmala went so far as to argue that Hebrews was written to Essenes in order to convert them to the Christian faith; see *Hebräer—Essener—Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (StPB 1; Leiden: Brill, 1959). F. F. Bruce (“‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes?’” *NTS* 9 [1963]: 217–32) and Joseph Coppens (“Les affinités qumrâniennes de l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *NRTh* 94 [1962]: 128–41) independently offered moderating views; they both noted the affinities between Hebrews and the Qumran scrolls, but they also pointed out significant differences. The similarities between Hebrews and the scrolls can best be attributed to the sharing of a common cultural milieu and not to direct influence. In addition to the surveys already mentioned, see the overviews in F. C. Fensham,

The numerous backgrounds proposed this century for Hebrews cannot all be correct. What is probable is that they are all *partially* correct, i.e., they indirectly testify to the same or a similar attempt to apply to changing circumstances the teaching of the OT. . . . [Hebrews], Philo, Qumran, the Samaritans and *Merkabah* mysticism appear to represent a development of the OT which does not point to any real interdependence.²¹

Ken Schenck remarks that "One of the main problems with previous research on Hebrews has been a tendency to pigeonhole the epistle into a *single* ideological background such as Platonism or apocalypticism."²² He cites Dey's work,²³ which interprets Hebrews against the background of Middle Platonism, as an example of this tendency. It is more likely that there are multiple influences on Hebrews' thought world, but that other Christian traditions play a central role.²⁴ Similarly, Jeremy Punt, in a survey and evaluation of the various proposed backgrounds to Hebrews'

"Hebrews and Qumrân," *Neot* 5 (1971): 9–21; Irvin W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Directions," in *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich: Lexicographer, Scholar, Teacher, and Committed Christian Layman* (eds. Eugene Howard Barth and Ronald Edwin Cocroft; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 16–35; Bruce, "To the Hebrews: A Document of Roman Christianity?" *ANRW* 25.4:3510–13; and Harold W. Attridge, "How the Scrolls Impacted Scholarship on Hebrews," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Volume Three: The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 203–30. Mason determines that the Qumran scrolls are the best background for the high priest motif in Hebrews (*Priest Forever*, 203).

Apocalyptic Judaism: E.g., C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954; repr., 1964), 363–93; Michel, *Hebräer*; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 301–7; Bertold Klappert, *Die Eschatologie des Hebräerbriefs* (TExH 156; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1969); Hofius, *Katapausis*; John McRay, "Atonement and Apocalyptic in the Book of Hebrews," *ResQ* 23 (1980): 1–9; A. N. Chester, "Hebrews: The Final Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (ed. S. W. Sykes; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 57–72.

Merkabah Mysticism: E.g., Hans-Martin Schenke, "Erwägungen zum Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes," in *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz. Festschrift für Herbert Braun zum 70. Geburtstag am 4. Mai 1973* (eds. Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973), 433–34; Ronald Williamson, "The Background of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 87 (1976): 232–37; Hofius, *Vorhang*, 95.

Samaritanism: E.g., E. A. Knox, "The Samaritans and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Chm* 22 (1927): 184–93; C. H. H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity," *NTS* 19 (1972–1973): 390–414.

Mystery Religions: MacNeill's argument for the influence of mystery religions on Hebrews has largely been overlooked in Hebrews scholarship; see *Christology*, 108–18.

²¹ Hurst, *Hebrews*, 131–32.

²² Kenneth Lee Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTMS 143; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3 (italics his).

²³ Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBLDS 25; Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1975).

²⁴ Schenck, *Cosmology*, 4–5.

thought patterns, avers that, "Hebrews gives testimony of utilising a number of traditions, wittingly and unwittingly. It shares the terminology, concepts, thoughts and ideas of a variety of diverse and different traditions, movements and groups."²⁵ While it is likely that Hebrews utilizes a variety of traditions, it also must be kept in mind that the author could have employed terminology from another tradition without accepting the ideology that lies behind these terms. The text itself must always be first in the determination of meaning.²⁶

There have been many attempts to relate Hebrews to other Christian traditions: Stephen, Luke-Acts, John, Mark, 1 Peter, and especially Paul.²⁷ These studies have demonstrated that Hebrews possesses a great number of affinities with other early Christian writings. These similarities can be attributed to the fact that Hebrews shares a common religious milieu with other early Christian writings. There are, however, significant differences between Hebrews and these other Christian writings. So, while one may

²⁵ Jeremy Punt, "Hebrews, Thought-Patterns and Context: Aspects of the Background of Hebrews," *Neot* 3 (1997): 145. Oddly, Punt does not seem to be aware of Hurst's monograph when writing this essay.

²⁶ Schenck says, "The text itself must always have the upper hand in interpretation. The frequently opposite focus of the earlier *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* was its most fundamental weakness" (*Cosmology*, 6).

²⁷ Stephen: E.g., Scott, *Hebrews*, 62–65; William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), 25–46; Hurst, *Hebrews*, 89–106.

Luke-Acts: E.g., C. P. M. Jones, "The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Lucan Writings," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 113–43; David L. Allen, *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews* (NAC Studies in Bible and Theology; Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010).

John: E.g., C. Spicq, "L'origine johannique de la conception du Christ-prêtre dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Aux sources de la tradition chrétienne: Mélanges offerts à M. Maurice Goguel à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire* (Bibliothèque théologique; Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950), 258–69; idem, *Hébreux*, 1109–38; C. J. A. Hickling, "John and Hebrews: The Background of Hebrews 2.10–18," *NTS* 29 (1983): 112–16.

Mark: E.g., A. A. K. Graham, "Mark and Hebrews," in *Studia Evangelica IV: Papers Presented to the Third International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1965. Part I: The New Testament Scriptures* (ed. F. L. Cross; TUGAL 102; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 411–16.

1 Peter: E.g., Milligan, *Theology*, 193–97; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1139–44; T. E. S. Ferris, "A Comparison of 1 Peter & Hebrews," *CQR* 111 (1930): 123–27; Hurst, *Hebrews*, 125–30.

Paul: E.g., Ménégos, *Théologie*, 181–97; Milligan, *Theology*, 197–203; Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (2d ed.; HNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1931), 128–31; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1144–68; Albert Vanhoye, "L'Épître Éphésienne et l'Épître aux Hébreux," *Bib* 59 (1978): 198–230; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 30–31; Hurst, *Hebrews*, 117–24; Ben Witherington III, "The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews," *NTS* 37 (1991): 146–52.

Riehm deals with each of these traditions in his *Lehrbegriff* (passim).

discern some dependence on other writings, the author of Hebrews was certainly an independent thinker in his own right.

Another common method is what may be termed the *comparative literature* approach. This approach, while not necessarily positing a direct influence, attempts to illuminate terms and concepts in Hebrews by tracing them in early Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman literature. A few examples will illustrate this method: (1) Jerome Neyrey surveys Hellenistic literature to demonstrate that the appellations made about Melchizedek (and hence, Jesus) in 7:3 were commonplaces used to describe divine figures;²⁸ (2) a number of scholars have argued that Hebrews depicts Jesus in chapter 2 after the manner of ancient Greek and Roman heroes such as Heracles, Odysseus, and Aeneas;²⁹ (3) Patrick Gray catalogues Greco-Roman fraternal language to elucidate the picture of Jesus as “big brother” in Hebrews 2;³⁰ (4) Clayton Croy draws upon Hellenistic athletic imagery to explicate the agonistic language of 12:1–3;³¹ (5) David deSilva uses a comparative method in his sociological approach to Hebrews. He gives an impressive reading of Hebrews through the lens of sociological categories such as honor/shame language, patron-client relationships, and patronage/benefaction.³² Many other examples could be adduced. In conducting

²⁸ Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘Without Beginning of Days or End of Life’ (Heb 7:3): Topos for a True Deity,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 439–55. A revised version of this influential article appears later in “Who Else Is Called ‘God’?: Jesus in Hebrews,” in *Render to God: New Testament Understandings of the Divine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 228–42.

²⁹ E.g., Wilfred L. Knox, “The ‘Divine Hero’ Christology in the New Testament,” *HTR* 41 (1948): 229–49; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 102–3; David E. Aune, “Heracles and Christ: Heracles Imagery in the Christology of Early Christianity,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christian: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (eds. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 3–19; Harold W. Attridge, “Liberating Death’s Captives: Reconsideration of an Early Christian Myth,” in *Gnosticism & the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson* (eds. James E. Goehring et al.; Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1990), 103–15; Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, “The Hero in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Jesus as an Ascetic Model,” in *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Boyon* (eds. David H. Warren, Ann Graham Brock, and David W. Pao; BINS 66; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179–88; Mark Reasoner, “Divine Sons: Aeneas and Jesus in Hebrews,” in *Reading Religions in the Ancient World: Essays Presented to Robert McQueen Grant on His goth Birthday* (eds. David E. Aune and Robin Darling Young; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 149–75.

³⁰ Patrick Gray, *Godly Fear: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Greco-Roman Critiques of Superstition* (SBLAcBib 16; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 125–38; idem, “Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology of Hebrews,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 335–51.

³¹ N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12:1–13 in Its Rhetorical, Religious, and Philosophical Context* (SNTSMS 98; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37–76.

³² David Arthur deSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

such comparative approaches to Hebrews, one must be careful not to press the comparative language too far.³³ For example, while the comparison of Jesus with Greco-Roman heroes is quite instructive, one wonders if the author of Hebrews was consciously drawing upon such mythological images in his depiction of Jesus when more readily available parallels can be found in the LXX in which ἀρχηγός refers to tribal and military leaders such as the spies in Num 13:2–3 and Jephthah in Judg 11:6, 11.

Each of the various methodological approaches has its strengths and has made valuable contributions to the study of Hebrews but as this cursory survey has shown each methodological approach also has weaknesses. This is the reason why we need a variety of methodological approaches to counterbalance the weaknesses of others. No doubt there will be weaknesses in the methodological approach that will be attempted in this study, but hopefully it will make a valuable contribution to the study of the Christology of Hebrews by presenting a new way of looking at the material and offering new insights.

This study of the Christology of Hebrews differs from previous studies in a couple of ways. First, this study will look specifically at the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews, that is, it will seek to uncover the “personality” of Jesus—his traits and attributes—that underlie the many christological statements made about Jesus in Hebrews. Very little has been done in terms of analyzing the character of Jesus in Hebrews. Scholars have drawn attention to a few of Jesus’ character traits in Hebrews. For example, MacNeill mentions some of the human characteristics of Jesus: his patient endurance, faith, faithfulness, mercy, and his being perfected.³⁴ There have been some studies that have focused on Jesus’ character of faithfulness.³⁵ Kevin McCruden has highlighted the important character

³³ Jason Whitlark, for example, takes deSilva to task for his overreading of patronage language in Hebrews; see Jason A. Whitlark, *Enabling Fidelity to God: Perseverance in Hebrews in Light of the Reciprocity Systems of the Ancient Mediterranean World* (PBM; Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008).

³⁴ MacNeill, *Christology*, 24–28.

³⁵ E.g., Thomas H. Olbricht, “The Faith (Faithfulness) of Jesus in Hebrews,” in *Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson* (eds. Mark W. Hamilton, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Jeffrey Peterson; PTMS; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2007), 116–32; Todd D. Still, “*Christos as Pistos*: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 746–55; Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (PTMS 82; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2008); Richardson, *Pioneer*.

trait of Jesus' beneficence.³⁶ But there has never been a thorough treatment of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews.

Second, in seeking to reconstruct the author's characterization of Jesus, this study will use a literary and, in particular, a rhetorical approach to the Christology of Hebrews. The task will be primarily descriptive, that is, this study will attempt to reconstruct Hebrews' characterization of Jesus on its own terms, but unlike previous descriptive approaches, it will analyze the characterization of Jesus in rhetorical categories of the person, rather than in theological categories (although there will be inevitable overlap).

Since this study will be using primarily a literary and rhetorical descriptive approach, it will not be so concerned about tracing the traditions that lie behind the author's presentation of Jesus, nor will it be concerned about situating Hebrews within a particular religious-historical framework. This study's approach towards the titles of Jesus in Hebrews might best illustrate its methodology. One of the more well-known works on the titles of Jesus is the book by Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum*.³⁷ The subtitle of his work points towards Hahn's concern to trace the tradition-history behind some of the more significant christological titles (Son of Man, Kyrios, Christos, Son of David, and Son of God) before they became fixated in writing. As I. Howard Marshall notes, Hahn is "not particularly interested in the redactional tendencies shown by the Evangelists when they set down the tradition in the Gospels. Nor is he concerned to set out systematically the Christology of, say, Paul or the writer to the Hebrews."³⁸ This study differs from Hahn's in a couple of important ways. First, whereas Hahn wants to locate the meaning of christological titles within their tradition-historical development, this study's concern is to locate the meaning of the titles within the text itself to determine how they contribute rhetorically to the characterization of Jesus. Second, whereas Hahn focuses solely on titles as a means of getting at Christology, this study will focus more broadly on Jesus' deeds

³⁶ Kevin B. McCrudden, *Solidarity Perfected*; and "Christ's Perfection in Hebrews: Divine Beneficence as an Exegetical Key to Hebrews 2:10," *BR* 47 (2002): 40–62.

³⁷ Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963. English translation was made by Harold Knight and George Ogg: *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London: Lutterworth, 1969).

³⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (rev. ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990), 24–25.

and speeches and other aspects that can contribute to an understanding of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews.³⁹

Since the descriptive task, as already noted, is insufficient by itself, it is unavoidable, however, that this study will have to draw upon other sources in order to illuminate how the author and his implied or authorial audience may have understood a particular term. It is clear that the author's primary source of theological reflection is Israel's Scriptures, as evidenced by the numerous quotations and allusions that abound throughout the book. Hebrews scholarship has focused on numerous aspects of Hebrews' use of Scripture such as the original text form utilized by Hebrews, its quotation practice, its exegetical methods, and/or its hermeneutical philosophy.⁴⁰ This study will be concerned with the author's use of Scripture only insofar as it elucidates the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. It will of course be necessary to draw upon other early Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman literature on occasion to help clarify the meaning of terms and concepts found in Hebrews.

There are several advantages to rhetorical criticism. First, it concentrates on the final form of a text as we have it. If an author has utilized traditional materials, rhetorical criticism is concerned about how the author has incorporated those traditional materials to function in a new rhetorical situation. If a text underwent a series of redactions, rhetorical criticism is more concerned about the rhetorical effect those redactions make in the overall flow of a document.

³⁹ Leander Keck trenchantly criticizes a titles-oriented approach to Christology in "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 362–77. Keck wants to eschew an approach to Christology that *only* considers the history of titles (368). This approach is inadequate because it assumes meanings reside in singular words. Rather, the meaning of words must be derived from their context in relation to other words (368). Second, he notes that concentration on titles "hampers the effort to understand christology in the NT texts" (369). Among other things, it "cannot deal adequately with christologically-important passages in which no title appears"; the Gospels simply refer to *Jesus* by name, and *Christ* is frequently used as a proper name in the epistles (369). Moreover, this approach does not "deal adequately with the plurality of titles in a given text" and it "can lead one to miss the christology in the text" (369). The text should remain primary in any study of Christology (371). Keck believes that the newer approaches of literary, discourse, and rhetorical analyses are well equipped for the study of Christology within the "thought-structure and argument of the text" (372).

⁴⁰ There are numerous important studies on Hebrews' use of the OT which cannot be listed here. Surveys of research can be found in: Feld, *Hebräerbrief*, 29–34; Lane, *Hebrews*, cxii–cxxiv; Gheorghita, *Septuagint*, 7–25; George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research," *CBR* 1 (2003): 271–94; Harrington, *What Are They Saying*, 41–63; Susan Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT 2/260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 9–82.

Second, it attempts to understand texts in terms of ancient conventions. Ancient cultures were primarily oral cultures. While some individuals were certainly literate, the majority of people were not literate. Rhetoric was part of a person's rudimentary education.⁴¹ Ancient documents such as Hebrews were written with the intention that they would be heard orally by the communities which received them. Scholars have noted the oral character of Hebrews.⁴² Some markers of its orality include the use of the first person plural, the many references to speaking and hearing to characterize the author's message (2:5; 5:11; 6:9; 8:1; 9:5; 11:32), the alternation between exposition and exhortation, the introduction of themes which are more fully developed later, and the use of rhetorical figures such as alliteration, assonance, paronomasia, anaphora, and so forth.

Third, rhetorical criticism recognizes the persuasive purpose of ancient texts. It seeks to uncover the rhetorical strategies that were designed to have the greatest persuasive impact upon the audience. Ancient rhetoric addressed five basic aspects that formed the steps used to construct a speech. *Invention* dealt with the discovery of suitable arguments to be used in the support of a case. *Arrangement* was the organization or structure of the speech. *Style* referred to the selection of words and their arrangement within sentences. *Memory* was important for the preparation of a speech. *Delivery* dealt with the control of the voice and gestures. The first three are the most important features for the study of biblical texts. We turn now to a consideration of how rhetorical criticism has been applied to the book of Hebrews.

RHETORICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews has long been recognized as one of the most rhetorically skilled documents in the NT.⁴³ Numerous scholars have noted

⁴¹ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 8–9; Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 10; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 56–59.

⁴² E.g., Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 10; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 40–42; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 10–11; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 21.

⁴³ For a recent overview of the history of rhetorical criticism and its application to Hebrews, see: Gabriella Gelardini, "Rhetorical Criticism in Hebrews Scholarship: Avenues and Aporias," in *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor*

Hebrews' elevated vocabulary, style, and rhythm.⁴⁴ Hebrews exhibits a highly distinctive vocabulary which contains numerous rare words and *hapax legomena*.⁴⁵ Hebrews is also noted for choosing words and constructing sentences for their aural or visual qualities.⁴⁶ Attention has also been given specifically to rhetorical terminology contained in Hebrews.⁴⁷ The author is capable of varying his style between complex periodic sentences, some of which have poetic quality (1:1–4; 2:2–4, 8–9; 14–15; 5:7–10; 6:4–6; 7:1–3; 9:6–10; 10:19–25; 12:1–2), and compact phrases (2:16; 3:19; 4:9; 7:19; 9:16; 10:4, 18, 31; 11:1; 12:29; 13:1, 8) or staccato questions (3:16–18). Friedrich Blass has done the most comprehensive analysis of the rhythmic quality of Hebrews, but other scholars have noted this feature as well.⁴⁸ Scholars have particularly observed an abundance of literary and rhetorical tropes employed by Hebrews.⁴⁹ Other scholars have addressed

of Harold W. Attridge (ed. Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards; SBLRBS 67; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 213–36.

⁴⁴ See: F. Blass, "Die rhythmische Komposition des Hebräerbriefes," *TSK* 75 (1902): 420–61; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, lvi–lxiv; A. M. Vitti, "Le bellezze stilistiche della Lettera agli Ebrei," *Bib* 17 (1936): 137–66; Walter Albert Jennrich, "Rhetorical Style in the New Testament: Romans and Hebrew" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1947), 39–125; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:351–78; Black, "Hebrews 1"; idem, "Literary Artistry in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *FgNt* 7 (1994): 43–51; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 20–21; Paolo Garuti, *Alle origini dell'omiletica Cristiana: La lettera agli Ebrei* (SBFA 38; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1995), 33–184; Andrew H. Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews* (GNTE 6; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 163–84; David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 35–39; Koester, *Hebrews*, 92–96; Eta Linemann, "A Call for a Retrial in the Case of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *FM* 19 (2002): 27–37; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 8–9; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 39–42.

⁴⁵ Spicq (*Hébreux*, 1:157) lists 152 *hapax legomena*, while Ellingworth lists 154 with respect to the NT (*Hebrews*, 12–13n28). Lane (*Hebrews*, 1) and Witherington (*Hebrews*, 39) claim there are 169. Ninety words are found in only one other place in the NT, while ten words are absolute *hapaxes* (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 21; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 8).

⁴⁶ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 8; Koester, *Hebrews*, 92; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 39.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Wilhelm C. Linss, "Logical Terminology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CTM* 37 (1966): 365–69; Alan C. Mitchell, "The Use of πρέπειν and Rhetorical Propriety in Hebrews 2:10," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 681–701; Hermut Löhr, "Reflections of Rhetorical Terminology in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 199–210.

⁴⁸ Blass, "Rhythmische Komposition." See also Moffatt, *Hebrews*, lvi–lix; Vitti, "bellezze stilistiche," 158–62; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:359–61; Garuti, *Alle origini*, 167–82; Trotter, *Interpreting*, 72–75.

⁴⁹ The following literary and rhetorical devices have been observed in Hebrews: alliteration, anadiplosis, anaphora, antistrophe, antithesis, aposiopesis, assonance, asyndeton, brachylogy, catachresis, chiasmus, circumlocution, climax, cyclosis, ekphrasis, ellipse, emphasis, enallage, epanalepsis, epanaphora, exegesis, hendiadys, homoiopiton, homoioteleuton, hypallage, hyperbaton, hyperbole, inclusio, irony, isocolon, litotes, meiosis, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, paraleipsis, parechesis, parenthesis, pariosis, paromoiosis, paronomasia, periphrasis, pleonasm, polyptoton, polysyndeton, rhetorical

the canons of invention and arrangement⁵⁰ or the persuasive strategies of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in Hebrews.⁵¹

There have been numerous attempts to define the rhetorical genre of Hebrews and to outline its rhetorical structure. Hans von Soden was the

questions, simile, synecdoche, synonymy, symploke, zeugma. The most sustained discussions can be found in Jennrich, "Rhetorical Style," 69–118; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:361–64; Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1988), 41–84; and Garuti, *Alle origini*, 58–119. Other works that address this topic in varying degrees include: John Bligh, "The Structure of Hebrews," *HeyJ* 5 (1964): 170–77; George E. Rice, "The Chiastic Structure of the Central Section of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AUSS* 19 (1981): 243–46; Walter G. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu exordium, narratio, und postscriptum (Hebr 1–2 und 13,22–25)* (ConBNT 21; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 134–35; Attridge, "The Uses of Antithesis in Hebrews 8–10," *HTR* 79 (1986): 1–9; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 20–21; Karen H. Jobes, "Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Psalm 40," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 387–96; idem, "The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5–7," *TJ* 13 (1992): 181–91; Ebert, "Chiastic Structure"; Victor C. Pfitzner, "The Rhetoric of Hebrews: Paradigm for Preaching," *LITJ* 27 (1993): 3, 8–9; Alan D. Bulley, "Death and Rhetoric in the Hebrews 'Hymn to Faith,'" *SR* 25 (1996): 411–12; Trotter, *Interpreting*, 167–77; deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 31–32; idem, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 37–38; Koester, *Hebrews*, 94–96; Linnemann, "Retrial," 32–35; Guthrie, "First-Century Contexts," 422; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 8–9; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 19–21; Richard Thiele, "A Reexamination of the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2008), 85–87 (includes a nice chart); O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 24; David H. Thiele, "From Son to High Priest: The Christological Rhetoric of Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., University of Queensland, 2008), 52–53; David Mark Heath, "Chiastic Structures in Hebrews: A Study of Form and Function in Biblical Discourse" (Ph.D. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2011). Bruce W. Longenecker draws attention to the importance of chain-link transitions in Hebrews in *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of the New Testament Chain-Link Transitions* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005); see in particular pages 3, 31–32, 37–38, and 46.

⁵⁰ Jennrich ("Rhetorical Style," 126–40) observes that Hebrews makes use of enthymemes, epicheiremes, examples, maxims, comparisons, rhetorical questions, and citations. He sees an arrangement of proemium (1:1–3), narrative and proof (1:4–13:17), and epilogue (13:18–25); see pages 144–53. See also Garuti, *Alle origini*, 185–385; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 38–39; Koester, *Hebrews*, 93–94.

⁵¹ Pfitzner, "Rhetoric"; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 43–46; idem, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 781–87; Koester, *Hebrews*, 87–92; Walter G. Übelacker, "Hebrews and the Implied Author's Rhetorical Ethos," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; ESEC; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 316–34; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 14–15, 31–32; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 17–19; Schenck, *Cosmology*, 7–9; Heather M. Gorman, "The Power of *Pathos*: Emotional Appeal in Hebrews" (M.A. thesis, Abilene Christian University, 2009); idem, "Persuading through *Pathos*: Appeals to the Emotions in Hebrews," *ResQ* 54 (2012): 77–90; Amy L. B. Peeler, "The Ethos of God in Hebrews," *PRSt* 37 (2010): 37–51. Attention to the author's rhetorical argumentation (*logos*) can be found in Barnabas Lindars, "The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews," *NTS* 35 (1989): 382–406; Walter G. Übelacker, "Hebr 7:1–10—dess struktur och funktion i författarens retoriska argumentation," in *Mellan tid och evighet: Festskrift till Bo Johnson* (eds. Sten Hidal, Lars Haikola, and Stig Norin; Religio 42; Lund: Teologiska

first to analyze the structure of the book along the lines of ancient judicial rhetoric.⁵² Scholars today, however, generally agree that Hebrews does not fall under this category of rhetoric. Instead, scholars are divided as to whether Hebrews should be considered deliberative, epideictic, or a combination of both.⁵³ Some scholars view Hebrews as deliberative because of its extensive use of exhortation and examples, among other things.⁵⁴ Keijo Nissilä concludes that the high priest motif forms the central structural element of a deliberative speech with the following arrangement: *exordium* (1:1–4), *narratio* (1:5–2:18), *argumentatio* (3:1–12:29), and *epilogus* (13:1–25).⁵⁵ Walter Übelacker also views Hebrews as a deliberative speech, but proposes a slightly different structure.⁵⁶ By contrast, others claim that Hebrews exhibits epideictic rhetoric because it praises the significance of Jesus and/or it reinforces values that the audience already held.⁵⁷ Still

Institutionen, 1994), 215–32; Thomas H. Olbricht, “Anticipating and Presenting the Case for Christ as High Priest in Hebrews,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (eds. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker; ESEC 9; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 355–72; Schenck, *Cosmology*, 24–47.

⁵² He proposed the following structure: *προοίμιον* (1:1–4) with a presentation of the πρόθεσις (1:5–4:13), διήγησις (4:14–6:20), ἀποδείξις (7:1–10:18), and ἐπίλογος (10:19–13:21); see Hans von Soden, *Hebräerbrief* (3d ed.; Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1899), 11. This arrangement was followed with slight modifications by Theodor Haering, “Gedankengang und Grundgedanken des Hebräerbriefs,” *ZNW* 18 (1917–1918): 153–63; and Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 8.

⁵³ Rhetorical genre will be considered in more depth in chapter three; see pages 102–6.

⁵⁴ E.g., Lindars, “Rhetorical Structure,” 382–83; Mitchell, “Rhetorical Propriety,” 689, 692; Garuti, *Alle origini*, 200; Bulley, “Death,” 420n29; Lee Zachary Maxey, “The Rhetoric of Response: A Classical Rhetorical Reading of Hebrews 10:32–12:13” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2002), 125; Löhr, “Reflections,” 210; Thiele, “From Son to High Priest,” 55–57, 286.

⁵⁵ Nissilä, *Hohepriestermotiv*, 5*, 24, 39–40, 47, 53, 109, 151.

⁵⁶ Übelacker suggests the following structure: *prooemium* (1:1–4), *narratio* (1:5–2:18) with *propositio* in 2:17–18, *argumentatio* with *probatio* and *refutatio* (3:1–12:29), *peroratio* (13:1–21), and *postscriptum* (13:22–25); see Übelacker, *Hebräerbrief als Appell*, 214–29. His outline is found on page 224. He reaffirms Hebrews as deliberative rhetoric in “Rhetorical Ethos,” 316.

⁵⁷ E.g., David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 212; C. Clifton Black, “The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills,” *HTR* 81 (1988): 5; Harold W. Attridge, “Paraenesis in a Homily (λόγος παρακλήσεως): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews,’” *Semeia* 50 (1990): 214; John Reumann, “Enigmatic Hebrews: A Rhetorical Appeal for Steadfast Faith in our Great High Priest and in the Better Covenant,” in *Variety and Unity in New Testament Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 168; Pfitzner, “Rhetoric,” 4; Timothy Wayne Seid, “The Rhetorical Form of the Melchizedek/Christ Comparison in Hebrews 7” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1996), 2, 133; Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews in Literary Context* (SBLDS 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 12; McCrudden, “Christ’s Perfection,” 57; idem, *Solidarity Perfected*, 133; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 40–54.

others view Hebrews as some sort of combination of both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric.⁵⁸ Attempts to arrange Hebrews according to the divisions of classical rhetoric have also been made by Ceslas Spicq, Hans-Friedrich Weiss, Knut Backhaus, Lauri Thurén, Craig Koester, A. T. Lincoln, and James Thompson.⁵⁹

While this study will not argue extensively for a particular rhetorical structure, of the structures thus far proposed, the one that makes most sense is the one offered by Andrew Lincoln, who outlines the following structure: *exordium* (1:1–4), *argumentatio* (1:5–12:17), *peroratio* (12:18–29), and epistolary conclusion (13:1–25). Lincoln's proposal is attractive for the following reasons. First, it appears that the author begins his argumentation with the *catena* in 1:5–14. It does not read like a narration of the facts of a case (nor does there appear to be a *narratio* in chapters 2 through 4 either). The fact that the author begins his argumentation with 1:5–14

⁵⁸ E.g., Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 186–87; George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 32; deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 34–38; idem, *Perseverance*, 46–58; Lauri Thurén, “The General New Testament Writings,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Boston: Brill, 2001), 590; Koester, *Hebrews*, 82; idem, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 104; Grant R. Osborne, “The Christ of Hebrews and Other Religions,” *JETS* 46 (2003): 254–55; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 13; Andrew Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 16; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 12; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 25–26. DeSilva, Johnson, and Lincoln view the epideictic rhetoric as serving the deliberative rhetoric. They are joined by Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, who demonstrate how the epideictic rhetoric of Hebrews is consistently in service of the deliberative rhetoric; see “Choosing What Is Advantageous: The Relationship between Epideictic and Deliberative Syncrisis in Hebrews,” *NTS* 58 (2012): 379–400. For deSilva and Koester, the type of genre may also depend on the situation of the hearers.

⁵⁹ Ceslas Spicq: *Propositio* (1:1–4), *narratio*, (1:5–6:20), *argumentatio* (7:1–10:18; 10:19–12:13), and *peroratio* (12:14–29); see *Hébreux*, 1:38.

Hans-Friedrich Weiss: *Exordium* (1:1–4), *narratio* (1:5–4:13), *argumentatio* (4:14–10:18), and *peroratio* (10:19–13:21); see *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (15th ed.; KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 49–51.

Knut Backhaus: *Exordium* (1:1–4), *narratio* (1:5–4:13), *propositio* (4:14–16), *argumentatio* (5:1–10:18), and *peroratio* (10:19–13:21); see *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* (NTAbh 29; Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 58–64.

Lauri Thurén: *Exordium* with no *narratio* (1:1–2:18), *argumentatio* with *confirmatio* and *refutatio* (3:1–12:29), and *peroratio* (13:1–25); see “General NT Writings,” 590–91.

Craig R. Koester: *Exordium* (1:1–2:4), *propositio* (2:5–9), *argumentatio* with digressions (2:10–12:27), *peroratio* (12:28–13:21), and epistolary postscript (13:22–25); see *Hebrews*, 83–86; and “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 103–23.

A. T. Lincoln: *Exordium* (1:1–4), *argumentatio* (1:5–12:17), *peroratio* (12:18–29), and epistolary conclusion (13:1–25); see *Hebrews*, 24–25.

James W. Thompson: *Exordium* (1:1–4), *narratio* (1:5–4:13), *propositio* (4:14–16), *probatio* (5:1–10:31), and *peroratio* (10:32–13:25); see Thompson, *Hebrews*, 17–20.

is confirmed by the fact that he draws some initial conclusions from his argument in 2:1–4. Second, neither 2:5–9, 2:17–18, nor 4:14–16 read like a *propositio*; these passages do not account for the author's full argumentation in the entirety of the discourse. Third, 12:18–29 seems to be a fitting conclusion to the author's sustained argument in the first twelve chapters. Chapter 13 reads more like an epistolary ending that the author has appended to his discourse (see pages 31–33).

In conjunction with this proposed rhetorical structure, this study accepts the basic insights first proposed by George Bradford Caird,⁶⁰ and expanded upon by others,⁶¹ that the author of Hebrews arranges his argument around a series of key biblical passages upon which he grounds his exposition. The following outline reflects the structure proposed by John Walters, with slight modifications by Ben Witherington:⁶²

Section	Theme	OT Text	Paraenesis
Heb 1:5–2:4	Christ's superiority	Catena (1:5–13)	Heb 2:1–4
Heb 2:5–18	"you crowned him"	Ps 8 (2:6–8)	—
Heb 3:1–4:13	"today"	Ps 95 (3:7–11)	Heb 3:12–4:13
Heb 4:14–7:28	"priest forever"	Ps 110 (5:6)	Heb 4:14–16; 5:11–6:12
Heb 8:1–10:31	"new covenant"	Jer 31 (8:8–12)	Heb 10:19–29
Heb 10:32–12:2	"by faith"	Hab 2 (10:37–38)	Heb 10:32–36; 12:1–2
Heb 12:3–17	"do not lose heart"	Prov 3 (12:5–6)	Heb 12:3–16

The outline listed above comprises the author's *argumentatio*. In addition to the many suggestions for the rhetorical structure of Hebrews, numer-

⁶⁰ For Caird, the key passages are Pss 8, 95, 110, and Jer 31; see "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44–51.

⁶¹ Simon Kistemaker proposed an alternative to Caird's last Scripture, replacing Jer 31 with Ps 40 (*Psalm Citations*, 95–133). Richard N. Longenecker expanded upon Caird's proposal by adding the catena of quotations in chapter 1; see *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 156. R. T. France in turn expanded upon Longenecker's proposal by adding Hab 2, Prov 3, and the Mount Sinai passage of 12:18–29; see "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *TynBul* 47 (1996): 255–60. However, 12:18–29 does not contain a Scripture quotation; rather it is the conclusion, the *peroratio*, of his argument. Hence, Walters' expansion seems to make the most sense here.

⁶² John R. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *AsTJ* 51 (1996): 66; Ben Witherington, *Hebrews*, 51.

ous scholars have proposed a structure of Hebrews based on literary or linguistic criteria, but we will not consider these proposals here.⁶³

While all of these studies have provided valuable insights into the rhetorical skill and argumentation of the author of Hebrews, they have rarely elaborated on how rhetoric is used to develop the portrait of Jesus in the book. Nissilä, it is true, deals with the high priest motif in the book of Hebrews, but he is more concerned about the rhetorical function of the high priest motif, rather than how the author develops the portrait of Jesus as high priest through rhetoric. For Nissilä, the high priest motif is the central structural element of the book and it serves as the author's means to teach, admonish, delight, and reprove his audience. There are, however, a few studies that have pointed in the direction of a rhetorical analysis of the Christology of Hebrews.

C. F. Evans draws attention to the dominant and recurring role of *synkrisis* in the book of Hebrews. The device of *synkrisis* belonged to the species of encomiastic rhetoric in which orators were trained to make comparisons between two persons "under the headings of the home, ancestry, upbringing, exploits and death."⁶⁴ Hebrews is replete with comparison language which is often used to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to angels, Moses, Joshua, the Levitical priests, or the heroes of faith.⁶⁵ Evans has highlighted an important device that the author of Hebrews uses to develop the character of Jesus, but his brief essay is more suggestive than comprehensive. Moreover, he quickly moves on to other questions such as why the author chose to use this technique and what it might reveal about the author's background of thought, his exegetical methods and use of the OT, or about the author's addressees.⁶⁶

Thomas Olbricht, in a brief article entitled "Hebrews as Amplification," notes similarities between Hebrews and ancient funeral orations. The

⁶³ The literature on the structure of Hebrews is enormous. Useful surveys and overviews can be found in Guthrie, *Structure*, 3–41; Edgar V. McKnight, "Literary and Rhetorical Form and Structure in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *RevExp* 102 (2005): 255–79; Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 1–21; Antonio Portalatín, *Temporal Oppositions as Hermeneutical Categories in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (EUS.T 833; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), 26–33; Gabriella Gelardini, "Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht": *Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw* (BINS 83. Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11–55; Barry C. Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches," *CBR* 6 (2007): 99–129; Heath, "Chiastic Structures," 40–56.

⁶⁴ Evans, *Theology of Rhetoric*, 6.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Theology of Rhetoric*, 7–11.

⁶⁶ Evans, *Theology of Rhetoric*, 11–19.

ancient orator would arrange his encomium according to encomiastic topics (such as family, birth, natural endowment, upbringing, education, life and occupation, achievements, and fortune) and make comparisons with the great and famous. The use of comparison or synkrisis was one important means of amplifying one's subject. Olbricht offers a structure for Hebrews based on the arrangement of ancient funeral orations.⁶⁷ Olbricht then highlights three comparisons within Hebrews: Christ's superiority to the angels, to the Levitical priests and sacrifices, and to the past heroes of faith.⁶⁸ While Hebrews is not a funeral oration, Olbricht's basic insight holds: Hebrews uses encomiastic topics much like ancient funeral orations do.

In his dissertation, Timothy Seid provides an extensive investigation into synkrisis.⁶⁹ Seid rejects the designation of Hebrews as Jewish midrash, preferring to classify it under the genre of synkrisis, which employs encomiastic topics "in order to persuade the audience to modify their character and behavior accordingly."⁷⁰ Seid arranges Hebrews according to an alternating pattern of synkrisis and paraenesis.⁷¹ He outlines the book as follows:⁷²

- Angels (1:1–2:18)
 - Synkrisis of Son and Angels (1:1–14)
 - Paraenesis (2:1–18)
- Moses (3:1–4:16)
 - Synkrisis of Moses and Christ the Son (3:1–6)
 - Paraenesis (3:7–4:16)

⁶⁷ See chapter three (pages 130–31) for a lengthier discussion of Olbricht's article; Thomas H. Olbricht, "Hebrews as Amplification," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 378.

⁶⁸ Olbricht, "Amplification," 381–87.

⁶⁹ Seid, "Rhetorical Form." A distillation of his dissertation can be found in "Synkrisis in Hebrews 7: The Rhetorical Structure and Strategy," in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps; JSNTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 322–47.

⁷⁰ Seid, "Rhetorical Form," 3–32; "Synkrisis," 325. It is problematical to consider synkrisis as a literary genre; rather it refers to a rhetorical device that can be employed in a variety of genres.

⁷¹ Seid, "Rhetorical Form," 90–91; "Synkrisis," 328.

⁷² Seid, "Rhetorical Form," 90–91. Seid's structure is forced. In the first section the paraenesis encompasses only 2:1–4; the synkrisis between the Son and angels resumes at 2:5. Section 7:26–8:3 is not paraenesis; there are no imperatives or hortatory subjunctives in the whole section. Rather, 7:1–10:18 should be considered one extended synkrisis. In other words, Hebrews' structure is not as neat as Seid tries to make it out to be.

- Aaron (5:1–6:20)
 - Synkrisis of Aaron and Christ (5:1–10)
 - Paraenesis (5:11–6:20)
- Melchizedek (7:1–8:3)
 - Synkrisis of Melchizedek/Christ and Levitical Priesthood (7:1–25)
 - Paraenesis (7:26–8:3)
- Covenant (8:4–10:18)
 - Synkrisis of First Covenant and New Covenant (8:4–10:18)
 - Paraenesis (10:19–12:29)
- Epistolary Appendix (13:1–25)

While Seid does provide an overview of the argument of the whole book, he focuses his exegesis on chapter 7 which he outlines according to the encomiastic topics of name, parentage and genealogy, birth and death, office, action, status, tribal ancestry, and achievements.⁷³

Recently, Michael Martin and Jason Whitlark have offered a fascinating analysis of the structure of Hebrews based on the encomiastic topics of synkrisis.⁷⁴ They argue that Hebrews demonstrates the superiority of the new covenant to the old through a series of synkrisis which are arranged both chronologically and topically:⁷⁵

- I. Origins: Synkrisis of Covenant Heavenly Mediators:
 - Messengers/Angels vs. Jesus (1:1–14; 2:5–18)
- II. Birth: Synkrisis of Covenant Earthly Inaugurators:
 - Moses vs. Jesus (3:1–6)
- III. Pursuits–Education: Synkrisis of the Priestly Apprenticeships of Each Covenant:
 - The Aaronic High Priests vs. Jesus (5:1–10)
- IV. Pursuits–Deeds: Synkrisis of the Priestly Deeds of Each Covenant:
 - The Levitical Priestly Ministry vs. the Melchizedekian Priestly Ministry (7:1–10:18)
- V. Death/Events after Death: Synkrisis of Covenant Eschata:
 - Mt. Sinai vs. Mt. Zion (12:18–24)

Their article demonstrates that synkrisis can be used to compare things (such as covenants) as well as persons. This study will focus on demonstrating how the author uses synkrisis to construct the character of Jesus.

⁷³ See his outline in “Rhetorical Form,” 112 or “Synkrisis,” 328.

⁷⁴ Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, “The Encomiastic Topics of Synkrisis as the Key to the Structure and Argument of Hebrews,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 415–39. See their follow-up article which argues that the epideictic synkrisis are consistently in service of the deliberative synkrisis of the book (“Choosing”).

⁷⁵ The outline presented here combines the information on pages 423 and 425 (“Encomiastic Topics”).

Finally, David deSilva briefly discusses in his commentary the role of epideictic topics in Hebrews.⁷⁶ He notes that the author of Hebrews employs epideictic topics such as noble birth, illustrious ancestors, education, offices, physical advantages, moral excellences, and noble death in his presentation of Jesus.⁷⁷ Moreover, the author utilizes synkrisis, comparing Jesus to the angels, Moses, and the Levitical priests. DeSilva remarks that “From the material in Hebrews, therefore, one could construct a rather complete eulogy of Jesus.”⁷⁸ While Hebrews employs both deliberative and epideictic topics, it is the epideictic topics that serve the deliberative topics, “motivating the audience to pursue the course promoted and to avoid the alternative course.”⁷⁹ Ben Witherington, similarly in his commentary, points out the importance of synkrisis and encomiastic topics in the praise of Jesus.⁸⁰ While both deSilva and Witherington in the course of their commentaries highlight the important role these two devices play, neither one—as is the nature of commentaries—offers a sustained analysis of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews.⁸¹

Each of these last several authors mentioned has highlighted important rhetorical devices that the author of Hebrews uses to develop his portrait of Jesus: encomiastic topics and synkrisis as a form of amplification. Yet these techniques do not exhaust all the rhetorical devices that the author of Hebrews uses to develop the character of Jesus. Moreover, it is clear that none of the aforementioned authors have exhaustively treated the topic of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. In short, a sustained, thoroughgoing, rhetorical analysis of the Christology of Hebrews has not been attempted. This study intends to remedy this lacuna by examining the Christology of Hebrews through the lens of characterization.

NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HEBREWS

But is it appropriate to use the category of *characterization* with regard to a non-narrative text? Kenneth Schenck is the first one to apply the tools

⁷⁶ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 52–56.

⁷⁷ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 53.

⁷⁸ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 54.

⁷⁹ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 54.

⁸⁰ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 48, 145–49.

⁸¹ As deSilva admits in his own monograph: “Commentaries generally are ill equipped to provide a coherent and connected interpretation of a text viewed from any particular perspective” (*Despising Shame*, 6).

of narrative criticism to the book of Hebrews.⁸² Schenck applies Seymour Chatman's distinction between *story* and *discourse* to Hebrews.⁸³ Story is composed of events, characters, and settings, while discourse is the expression or means by which the story is communicated. The same story can be told in many different ways, including non-narrative discourses.⁸⁴ Schenck remarks that Hebrews' thought world is basically narrative in orientation, that is, it assumes a basic story world underlying all of its arguments.⁸⁵ Schenck's monograph does not deal with Christology *per se*, but with the settings—time and space—of Hebrews' story world. In his more popularized work, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews*, Schenck briefly outlines the settings, events, and characters that underlie the basic plot of Hebrews' story world.⁸⁶ He offers a very brief discussion of Christ as one of the characters in the story.⁸⁷

James Miller also recognizes the narrative world underlying Hebrews.⁸⁸ Commenting on the opening words of the prologue, he remarks, "Here we find events and actions, characters and characterization, all set within a temporal framework."⁸⁹ He defines the *narrative world* of Hebrews as "the stories found in that writing that portray something of the 'world' imagined or created by the author."⁹⁰ He then notes that "stories involve

⁸² Schenck, *Cosmology*; see especially pages 10–17. He takes a more popularized approach in *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 5–23. Although the former book postdates the latter one, it is in fact based on his University of Durham doctoral dissertation of 1996 under a similar title.

⁸³ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19.

⁸⁴ Schenck, *Cosmology*, 11–13.

⁸⁵ Schenck, *Understanding*, 2. Narrative approaches have also been applied to Pauline studies; see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (2d ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Bruce W. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). For a narrative approach to 1 Peter, see M. Eugene Boring, "Narrative Dynamics in First Peter: The Function of the Narrative World," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter* (eds., Robert L. Webb and Betsy Baumann-Martin; LNTS 364; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 7–40.

⁸⁶ Schenck, *Understanding*, 5–23.

⁸⁷ Schenck, *Understanding*, 21–22.

⁸⁸ James C. Miller, "Paul and Hebrews: A Comparison of Narrative Worlds," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 245–64.

⁸⁹ Miller, "Paul and Hebrews," 245.

⁹⁰ Miller, "Paul and Hebrews," 247.

characters, settings, and events. Fundamentally, while involving characters and taking place in settings, stories consist of meaningfully related events ordered chronologically.”⁹¹ Based on these definitions, Miller seeks to define which events in Hebrews can be arranged in chronological order to “form a meaningful sequence of events.”⁹² He also seeks to identify what characters participate in these events and the settings in which they occur. He begins with the broad, all-encompassing narrative of “the God who spoke in the past, speaks in the present, and will once again speak in the future,”⁹³ before defining four subplots: the story of two covenants, the journey of Jesus, the story of God’s people in the Past, and the story of God’s People in the Present.⁹⁴ Miller’s essay is more programmatic than a detailed analysis of the story world of Hebrews.

In a recent dissertation, Matthew Easter works with the definition of *narrative* as proposed by Marie-Laure Ryan.⁹⁵ Easter demonstrates that Hebrews fulfills all eight “conditions of narrativity” as outlined by Ryan.⁹⁶ Easter proceeds to investigate the story world of Hebrews in terms of faith. The “default human story” is characterized by unfaithfulness and results in eschatological death. The author of Hebrews, however, invites his audience to participate in the story of faith as rewritten in Jesus who exemplified a life of faithfulness in the face of death and results in post-mortem life.⁹⁷ While Easter highlights the important character trait of the faithfulness of Jesus,⁹⁸ his study is not a thoroughgoing treatment of the characterization of Jesus.

⁹¹ Miller, “Paul and Hebrews,” 247–48.

⁹² Miller, “Paul and Hebrews,” 248–49.

⁹³ Miller, “Paul and Hebrews,” 249.

⁹⁴ Miller, “Paul and Hebrews,” 251–54.

⁹⁵ Marie-Laure Ryan outlines the “conditions of narrativity” as follows: *Spatial dimension*: (1) Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents; *Temporal dimension*; (2) This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations; (3) The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events; *Mental dimension*; (4) Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world; (5) Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents; *Formal and pragmatic dimension*; (6) The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure; (7) The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the storyworld; (8) The story must communicate something meaningful to the audience. See “Towards a Definition of Narrative,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (ed. David Herman; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29.

⁹⁶ Matthew C. Easter, “‘Let Us Go to Him’: The Story of Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago, 2011), 61–63.

⁹⁷ Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 78–79.

⁹⁸ See, in particular, Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 221–64.

Other scholars have recognized the story world behind the discourse of Hebrews. N. T. Wright briefly writes about the narrative world of Hebrews, which he summarizes as follows:

Underneath the poetic sequence of Hebrews, then, lies a clear implicit narrative sequence. The story of the world, and of Israel, has led up to a point, namely, the establishment of the true worship of the true god. This has now been achieved, not through the Jerusalem Temple and its high priesthood, but through Jesus.⁹⁹

Harold Attridge briefly investigates the story of God in Hebrews, noting the “implicit narrative that Hebrews relates about the actions of God in history.”¹⁰⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, in a brief article, seeks to reconstruct the symbolic world constructed by Hebrews through its engagement with Scripture.¹⁰¹ James Thompson briefly discusses the story world of Hebrews in the introduction of his commentary, noting that the author “places the community within the story world of the Hebrew scriptures,”¹⁰² but that “other dimensions of the story world of Hebrews are unique to the author.”¹⁰³

While each of these scholars has noted the story world that lies behind the discourse of Hebrews, none of them have offered a detailed analysis of Jesus as a character within this story world. This study intends to expand upon this notion of Jesus as a character in the story world of Hebrews through the tools of narrative and rhetorical criticism.

OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

Chapters two and three will lay the theoretical and methodological groundwork for an examination of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. Chapter two will begin with a definition of *character* and then will proceed with an overview of the modern narratological theory and practice of characterization. Of particular importance will be the description of

⁹⁹ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 409–10. The quotation is from page 410.

¹⁰⁰ Harold W. Attridge, “God in Hebrews: Urging Children to Heavenly Glory” in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology. Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of his Seventy-fifth Birthday* (eds. A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 197–209. The quotation is from page 199.

¹⁰¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” *Int* 57 (2003): 237–50.

¹⁰² Thompson, *Hebrews*, 21.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 22.

the various techniques used to construct characters. For example, narrators may directly *tell* readers what a character is like through description or evaluation, or they may indirectly *show* readers what a character is like through a variety of means. Characters may be revealed through their thoughts/feelings, speech, or actions; or through “external” factors such as names, titles, age, gender, physical appearance, clothing, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, educational background, and so forth. Characters also may be revealed by apposition with other characters, either by showing the thoughts/feelings, speech, or actions of characters towards one another, or through comparison and contrast of characters with one another. Characters may also be revealed through a variety of literary devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, and so forth. This chapter will then demonstrate that while the literary theory of characterization is rather modern, the *practice* of direct and indirect characterization was in fact practiced by ancient authors. This chapter will argue, however, that the *theory* of characterization was well-developed, not in literary theory (as found in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Horace’s *Ars Poetica*), but in rhetorical theory.

Chapter three will then proceed to develop a comprehensive overview of the rhetorical theory and practice of characterization as evidenced in the ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks (Aristotle, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero, Quintilian, the *Progymnasmata*, Menander Rhetor, and Pseudo-Dionysius). This chapter will give particular emphasis to the techniques of characterization which include encomiastic topics, amplification and minimization, synkrisis, vivid descriptions (such as *ekphrasis* and *diatyposis*), chreia, invented speech (such as prosopopoeia or ethopoeia), and literary tropes (metaphors, similes, epithets, allegory etc.). This chapter will also highlight the importance of testimony (divine and human). This chapter will conclude with a synthesis demonstrating the affinities between modern literary and ancient rhetorical theories and practices of characterization. The synthesis will also illustrate how the author of Hebrews utilizes these various techniques in his characterization of Jesus.

Chapter four will apply the techniques of characterization to develop a comprehensive reconstruction of the characterization of Jesus in the book of Hebrews. This chapter will be arranged according to the relevant encomiastic topics employed by Hebrews (such as name, nature, origin/race, training/education, titles/roles, actions/events, speech, and death). Discussions of the other techniques of characterization will appear in the appropriate places throughout the chapter. On occasion this chapter

will apply the techniques of modern literary theory of characterization in order to account for features of the author's characterization for which ancient theories of characterization are inadequate to describe. In short, this chapter will reveal the portrait of Jesus that emerges from the various techniques employed by the author of Hebrews. Jesus emerges as a person of exemplary character and his character will have important implications for the audience of Hebrews.

Chapter five will then explore the role of the author's characterization of Jesus for the overall argument of Hebrews. This chapter will engage in a sequential reading of Hebrews indicating how the emerging portrait of Jesus contributes to the development of the author's argument in the book. This chapter will conclude with an examination of the significance of the character of Jesus for the audience. First, Jesus' character brings many benefits for his followers. Believers share in the same status and privileges as Jesus and his character effects many soteriological benefits for his followers. Second, Jesus' character incurs certain obligations from his followers. His exemplary character is a model of imitation for his followers. His character also evokes both fear to avoid disobedience and unbelief, and encouragement to hold on to their faith and to move towards Christian maturity.

Chapter six will conclude with a summation of this study and suggest possibilities for future avenues for research.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE COMPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Before proceeding to a discussion of characterization, a few words must be said about the circumstances surrounding the composition of Hebrews. This study does not depend on any particular theory of authorship, recipients, provenance, or dating. No less than twenty-three different persons have been posited as the author of Hebrews—a virtual Who's Who of NT figures!¹⁰⁴ The best that can be said is that the author is likely a

¹⁰⁴ Apollos, Aquila, Aristion, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Cleopas, Epaphras, John, Jude, Luke, Mark, Mary the mother of Jesus, Nicodemus, Paul, Peter, Philip the Deacon, Priscilla, Silas, Stephen, Timothy, Titus, Zenas. Richard Thiele provides the most exhaustive survey of the different proposals for authorship ("Reexamination of the Authorship," 119–324). Thiele is apparently unaware of the proposal that Nicodemus was the author; see John M. Grant, "The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Homiletic Review* 65 (1913): 225–29. David L. Allen, who provides the most recent sustained effort to posit a specific author for Hebrews, has a brief overview on pages 10–22 in *Lukan Authorship*.

Hellenistic-Jewish Christian. The masculine participle (διηγούμενον) in 11:32 likely rules out a female author. The mention of Timothy in 13:23 suggests someone who was an acquaintance of Paul's. Hebrews shows some affinities in language and thought to the Pauline letters, but it is also sufficiently different that the author may have been influenced by Paul, but he certainly is an independent thinker in his own right. The author is known to the community but has been kept from them for some unspecified reason; the author hopes to be restored to the community soon (13:19).

The destination of the writing is equally disputed. At least fifteen different destinations have been posited.¹⁰⁵ The greeting in 13:24 suggests that the most that can be said is that Hebrews was written either to or from Rome (or Italy). Vanhoye suggests that Hebrews was a homily delivered to several churches by an itinerant preacher. Personal remarks specific to a community were attached to the end of the homily, in this case 13:22–25.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Hebrews preserves one instantiation of this homily. This theory is attractive because it accounts for the double ending of Hebrews (13:20–21 and 13:25). Traditionally, most scholars believe that the recipients were Jewish Christians, but some have argued for a Gentile or mixed audience. Others have argued that the book was addressed to a smaller group within a larger community.

We can infer some things about the implied audience of Hebrews. The audience obviously knew Greek and they held the Scriptures of Israel as authoritative. They were likely second-generation Christians who received the message of the gospel second-hand (2:3). They had been Christians long enough that they could have been teachers of the faith (5:12). Some of their leaders were no longer a part of the community (13:7). They had experienced some kind of hardship and/or persecution that likely included the confiscation of property and the imprisonment of some of the members of the community (10:32–34; 13:3). Strange teachings may also have infiltrated the community (13:9). Now the members of the community were wavering in their faith and perhaps on the verge of abandoning it; thus,

¹⁰⁵ Alexandria, Antioch, Berea, Caesarea, Corinth, Cyprus, Ephesus, Galatia, Jerusalem, Laodicea, Lycaonia, Lycus Valley, Macedonia, Rome, Spain. Spicq provides one of the most comprehensive presentations of the different theories proposed (*Hébreux*, 1:220–52). More recent overviews can be found in Bruce, “Roman Christianity,” *ANRW* 25.4:3513–19; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Leicester, England: Apollos, 1990), 696–701; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 9–10.

¹⁰⁶ Albert Vanhoye, *A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. Leo Arnold; Miami: Convivium, 2011), 19.

the author encourages them to hold on to their faith and to persevere (e.g., 3:6, 14; 6:11–12; 10:23, 35–39; 12:1–2).

The dating of Hebrews is also problematic. The *terminus ad quem* is usually placed around 95 C.E. since it is likely that Hebrews was utilized by the epistle of *First Clement* which is dated by most scholars towards the end of Domitian's reign (81–96 C.E.). Scholars are divided over whether Hebrews was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E. The mention of the tabernacle is quite enigmatic for dating Hebrews. If the temple was still in existence, it is quite puzzling why the author discusses the tabernacle and not the temple. If the temple was no longer in existence, then it is equally puzzling why the author does not mention its destruction since one would think that it could contribute to the author's argument about the obsolescence of the old covenant. The use of the present tense in Hebrews regarding the cultus does not necessarily indicate that the temple is still standing. Moffatt explains that the "writer is simply using the historic present of actions described in scripture. It is a literary method which is common in writings long after A.D. 70."¹⁰⁷ The mention of Timothy suggests an earlier date sometime in the sixties, but this is not decisive since it is quite conceivable that Timothy could still have had prominence in the early church for a couple of decades more. Hebrews provides few other clues to attach any firm dating. If Hebrews was written sometime in the sixties, then any one of a number of tumultuous events could have provided the motivation for its writing. The sixties saw the martyrdom of key Christian leaders (James, Peter, and Paul), the persecution of Nero in Rome, and the outbreak of the Jewish revolt in Judea. However, it is also possible that the author was addressing a quite localized situation unrelated to the larger events affecting the early Christian church, in which case setting a firm date is nearly impossible.

Finally, a word should be said about the genre and integrity of the book. Hebrews lacks an epistolary prescript but does contain an epistolary postscript. David Aune points out that an epistolary framework could be attached to any type of literary genre in the ancient world.¹⁰⁸ This seems to be the case with Hebrews. The author describes his work as a "word of exhortation" (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως; 13:22). This same expression is

¹⁰⁷ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xxii. Moffatt cites examples from Josephus, Clement of Rome, and the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

¹⁰⁸ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 158.

found in Acts 13:15 where it is used in the context of a synagogue service at which Paul stands up and speaks. It may have been a technical term for a sermon.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the first twelve chapters read more like a sermon than a letter. The tone and rhythm of chapter 13, by contrast, read quite differently; it does not have the sustained argument characteristic of the first twelve chapters, but reads more like a series of unrelated commands, personal comments, and doxologies. This difference has prompted some scholars to suggest that all or part of chapter 13 was a later addition to the sermon by the author himself, or by a later redactor who wanted to give the letter a more authoritative status by supplying a Pauline letter ending to the work.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Scholars have argued that Hebrews is a sermon. Hartwig Thyen identifies several characteristics that suggest that it was a Jewish-Hellenistic synagogue homily; see *Der Stil der Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Homilie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 16–18 and passim. James Swetnam provides a useful summary of Thyen's work in "On the Literary Genre of the 'Epistle' to the Hebrews," *NovT* 11 (1969): 261–69. Lawrence Wills detects a pattern of (1) authoritative exempla, (2) a conclusion based on the exempla, and (3) a final exhortation, that seemed to be typical of an early Hellenistic-Jewish or Christian "word of exhortation"; see "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *HTR* 77 (1984): 280–83. C. Clifton Black responded to Wills' article, noting that his insights find correlation with the canons of Greco-Roman rhetoric ("Rhetorical Form"). Attridge suggests that the formal features of Hebrews classify it as a "homily" or "word of exhortation," which falls under the sub-genre of paraenesis ("Paraenesis"). Gabriella Gelardini identifies Hebrew as an ancient synagogue homily given on the occasion of *Tisha be-Av*; see *Verhärtert*; and "Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for *Tisha be-Av*: Its Function, Its Basis, Its Theological Interpretation," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107–27. Hebrews is widely but not universally regarded as a sermon or homily by scholars.

¹¹⁰ The theories vary widely on the authorship of chapter 13 and on which parts of chapter 13 are considered original or secondary; they cannot all be rehearsed here. A survey of opinions can be found in Charles C. Torrey, "The Authorship and Character of the So-Called 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *JBL* 30 (1911): 148; Jukka Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräerbrief: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief 13* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1973), 49–55; Clare K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews* (WUNT 235; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 1–3, 45–62. Some scholars consider the whole of chapter 13 as secondary; see Edmund Jones, "The Authorship of Hebrews xiii," *ExpTim* 46 (1934–1935): 562–67; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 267; Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, "The 'Letter' to the Hebrews and Its Thirteenth Chapter," *NTS* 50 (2004): 390–405; and Trotter, *Interpreting*, 78. Other scholars think that only the postscript is secondary; see Torrey, "Authorship"; Jean Héring, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (CNT 12; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954), 121, 126–27; and John D. Legg, "Our Brother Timothy: A Suggested Solution to the Problem of the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *EvQ* 40 (1968): 220–23. William Wrede argues that the author changed his mind during the course of writing and decided to compose the postscript to pass it off as a Pauline letter; see *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes: Mit einem Anhang über den literarischen Charakter des Barnabasbriefes* (FRLANT 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906). Rothschild similarly argues that Hebrews is a Pauline forgery; the author intentionally wanted to pass his writing off as a Pauline letter (*Pseudepigraphon*).

This last theory seems untenable for a couple of reasons. First, if the author or redactor wanted to pass the writing off as a Pauline letter, then it seems inexplicable to account for an epistolary prescript that omits Paul's name. Second, the literary style and thought are consistent with the rest of the letter.¹¹¹ Hence, this study will adopt the view that the final chapter is an authentic part of the letter and it will be used in helping to reconstruct the author's characterization of Jesus.

¹¹¹ Numerous scholars have defended the integrity of chapter 13: E.g., Clarence Russell Williams, "A Word-Study of Hebrews 13," *JBL* 30 (1911): 129–36; R. V. G. Tasker, "The Integrity of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 47 (1935): 136–38; C. Spicq, "L'Authenticité du chapitre XIII de l'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Coniectanea neotestamentica XI: In honorem Antonii Fridrichsen sexagenarii* (Lund: Gleerup, 1947), 226–36; Floyd V. Filson, "Yesterday": *A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13* (SBT 2/4; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1967); Thurén, *Lobopfer*; Lindars, *Theology*, 7; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 13–14, 384; Lane, *Hebrews*, lxvii–lxviii, 2:491–507; Marie E. Isaacs, "Hebrews 13.9–16 Revisited," *NTS* 43 (1997): 270; David Allen, "Constructing 'Janus-Faced' Exhortations. The Use of Old Testament Narratives in Heb 13,1–8," *Bib* 89 (2008): 401–9. Lindars offers the intriguing suggestion that the whole of Hebrews was written by an amanuensis, but then the author added the final postscript in his own hand (*Theology*, 7).

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERIZATION IN LITERARY THEORY

The goal of this study is to analyze the characterization of Jesus in the book of Hebrews according to the theories and practices of modern narratology and ancient rhetoric. This analysis will begin with modern theories and practices of narratology before exploring ancient understandings of characters and their appropriation in rhetorical theory and practice. At first blush one might object to the legitimacy of applying modern narratological theory to the study of the book of Hebrews. Two objections may be raised. First, is it appropriate to apply modern theory to an ancient writing? Second, is it fitting to apply narratological theory to a non-narrative text such as Hebrews?

The twentieth century saw the rise of many new literary movements, such as Russian formalism, Anglo-American New Criticism, and French structuralism, which successfully applied their theories not only to modern literature, but to older works of literature as well. This is because these theories were largely descriptive in their tasks, rather than prescriptive. Scholars did not merely impose their theories upon works of literature, but observed how language and literature worked in actual practice. So, while much of literary theory is relatively new, it is based upon the practice of literature which is centuries old.¹ The insights from these theories began to be applied to the biblical text in a new discipline called *narrative criticism* in the early 1980s.² Since then, numerous studies have emerged

¹ William Shepherd also argues for the applicability of modern theories to ancient documents; see *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 147; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 49–51.

² The term *Narrative Criticism* was first coined by David Rhoads in his essay, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *JAR* 50 (1982): 411–34. Useful introductions to Narrative Criticism can be found in Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (trans. John Bowden; London: Cerf, 1999); and James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). A popularized introduction can be found in John A. Beck, *God as Storyteller: Seeking Meaning in Biblical Narrative* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008).

which have fruitfully employed narrative criticism to illuminate the biblical text.³

With regard to the second objection, Kenneth Schenck argues that “Hebrews’s thought is fundamentally *narrative* in orientation.”⁴ That is, it assumes an underlying story world behind its discourse. So, although Hebrews takes the form of an argument, “it is important to realize that *all its arguments are based on a story*.”⁵ Hence, there are underlying events, characters, and settings that comprise the *story world* or *narrative world* of Hebrews.⁶ This will be explored further below.

CHARACTERIZATION IN MODERN LITERARY THEORY

Definition of Character

Most discussions on characterization rarely offer a clear definition of *character*. Part of the difficulty is the ambiguity of the term. Anyone who peruses a standard English dictionary will immediately discover a host of definitions for the term. I will begin by offering my own set of definitions of *character* based on my study of narratological theory. *Character is a construct of the totality of traits and attributes belonging to a particular human or non-human figure in a given story*. A secondary definition is derivative: *a character refers to the literary figure which is the locus of the totality of these traits and attributes*. Thus, one can refer to a specific figure in a given story as a *character* (e.g., Moses is the main character in

³ The number of studies employing narrative criticism are too numerous to list here. Important early studies on OT narrative include Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup 70; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989; originally published in Hebrew in 1979); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985). Also useful for the study of OT narrative are David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (OBS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); and Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009). Seminal studies in the gospel narratives include David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999; first edition was published in 1982); R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); and Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

⁴ Schenck, *Understanding*, 2 (italics his).

⁵ Schenck, *Understanding*, 2 (italics his).

⁶ Schenck, *Understanding*, 3.

the book of Exodus) but one can also speak of the *character* of this same figure (e.g., Moses exhibits exemplary character). An explanation of these definitions is in order.

The first element of the definition states that character is a *construct*. Literary critics have described character in various ways. Mary Doyle Springer defines literary character as “an artificial construct drawn from, and relatively imitative of, people in the real world.”⁷ Martin Price calls character an “invention” whose reference is “to persons as we know them in the world outside” the text.⁸ Thomas Leitch declares that “character is a trope for human identity.”⁹ Mieke Bal describes characters as “anthropomorphic figures”¹⁰ which are “provided with distinctive human characteristics.”¹¹ All these definitions of character point to an important distinction: characters are not human beings, but they resemble human beings in important ways.¹²

E. M. Forster suggests that one of the ways in which characters and humans differ is that one cannot fully know a person because his or her inner life is unavailable to be perceived. As Forster states, “We know each other approximately, by external signs, and these serve well enough as a basis for society and even for intimacy.”¹³ One can, by contrast, completely understand a character if an author chooses to make him or her known, for the inner world of characters can be made accessible to the reader. W. J. Harvey similarly declares that one “can see the fictional character in his private self, secret, entirely solitary. Life allows only intrinsic knowledge of self, contextual knowledge of others; fiction allows both intrinsic and contextual knowledge of others.”¹⁴ At the same time, though,

⁷ Mary Doyle Springer, *A Rhetoric of Literary Character: Some Women of Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 14.

⁸ Martin Price, *Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 62.

⁹ Thomas M. Leitch, *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 148.

¹⁰ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 114.

¹¹ Bal, *Narratology*, 114.

¹² Bal states that a character “has no real psyche, personality, ideology, or competence to act, but it does possess characteristics which make psychological and ideological descriptions possible” (*Narratology*, 115).

¹³ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1927), 47.

¹⁴ W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965), 32. John Darr identifies other ways in which a reader's knowledge differs from knowledge of real people: (1) the encounter between the audience and character is not truly interactive; the reader is never confronted by the character; (2) there are no immediate emotional and

Joel Williams points out that “A great deal more can be known about a living person than about a character in a narrative, because in a narrative only a selective part of a character’s personality and story is presented.”¹⁵ This is important because this “limitation of information increases the significance of the material that is available to the reader concerning a character.”¹⁶

One of the most significant similarities between characters and people is that one can reconstruct the character of a literary figure in the same way one can reconstruct the character of real persons. Baruch Hochman explains:

What links characters in literature to people in life, as we fabricate them in our consciousness, is the integral unity of our conception of people and how they operate. . . . [T]here is a profound congruity between the ways in which we apprehend characters in literature, documented figures in history, and people of whom we have what we think of as direct knowledge in life. In my view, even the clues that we take in and use to construct an image of a person are virtually identical in literature and in life.¹⁷

Hochman’s comment brings up another important issue. Sometimes literary figures are based on actual, historical personages. Is it legitimate to treat historical personages as characters? R. Alan Culpepper deals with this question in his treatment of characterization in the Gospel of John. Culpepper argues that

even if one is disposed to see real, historical persons behind every character in John and actual events in every episode, the question of how the author chose to portray the person still arises. . . . Even if the figure is ‘real’ rather than ‘fictional,’ it has to pass through the mind of the author before it can be described.¹⁸

Historical personages, no less than fictional ones, can be characterized in a literary work.

practical consequences in the encounter between the reader and character; and (3) the reader is unable to gain information about the character through the “myriad ‘senses’ we have of other human beings through personal contact.” The reader’s experience of the character is totally verbal; see *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (LCBI; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 47.

¹⁵ Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel* (JSNTSup 102; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 56.

¹⁶ Williams, *Followers of Jesus*, 56.

¹⁷ Baruch Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 36. See Darr, *Character Building*, 46.

¹⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 105.

Yet, there are some critics who object to any comparison between characters and people. The creation of characters, and the reader's experience of them as personalities, is merely an illusion.¹⁹ Wallace Martin notes that such theorists consider "fictional characters [as] purely imaginary constructs, with no relationship to reality."²⁰ William Gass sardonically expresses this view: "Characters in fiction are mostly empty canvas. I have known many who have passed through their stories without noses, or heads to hold them; others have lacked bodies altogether, exercised no natural functions, possessed some thoughts, a few emotions, but no psychologies, and apparently made love without the necessary organs."²¹ L. C. Knights is another proponent of this view. In his famous essay entitled, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?,"—the title being a parody of the realistic approach he was criticizing—Knights insisted that critics should study the words of Shakespeare's plays and not treat the characters as if they were real.²² Characters, in this view, are merely reducible to the words of the text, and do not exist apart from the words in the text.

This reductionistic view of character has received strong opposition. Characters are not simply identical with the words by which they are created. Margaret MacDonald, in her discussion of Jane Austin's *Emma*, remarks that "Emma is a 'character.' As such, she can, in appropriate senses, be called charming, generous, foolish, and even 'lifelike.' No one could sensibly use these epithets of words."²³ Seymour Chatman protests that "the equation of characters with 'mere words' is wrong." He reasons that "Too many mimes, too many captionless silent films, too many ballets have shown the folly of such a restriction. Too often do we recall fictional characters vividly, yet not a single word of the text in which they came

¹⁹ William H. Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 37. O. B. Hardison states, "Hamlet and Macbeth do not have 'personalities' in the sense that living people do. Hamlet and Macbeth exist only as words on a printed page. They have no consciousness, and they do whatever the dramatist requires them to do. The feeling that they are living people whose personalities determine the actions they perform is an illusion"; see *Aristotle's Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature* (trans. Leon Golden; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 122. Norman Holland quotes several other critics who express this view (*Character*, 265–66).

²⁰ Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 119.

²¹ Gass, *Fiction*, 45.

²² L. C. Knights, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" in *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), 4, 6.

²³ Margaret Macdonald, "The Language of Fiction," in *Perspectives on Fiction* (eds. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 66.

alive; indeed, I venture to say that readers generally remember characters that way.”²⁴ In other words, characters transcend the mere words on a page and take on a life of their own. Readers have the ability to use their imagination to make inferences, to speculate, to make predictions, to fill in attributes left unstated by the text, and so forth; this is part of the aesthetic experience.²⁵ In this respect, art mimics life, for we often construct images of people from the scraps of information that we collect in the course of our life experiences.²⁶

Norman Holland tries to explain how readers identify with characters. He exclaims that “Logically, it simply does not make sense to treat literary characters as real people.”²⁷ Nevertheless, numerous studies have diagnosed Shakespeare’s characters as if they were real people. Holland remarks that “Psychoanalytic critics regularly apply psychological concepts from the world of everyday reality to characters who exist in a wholly different kind of world—it should not work but it does.”²⁸ In fact, all readers attribute personality and individuality to characters. Holland explains that “The plot or incidents cause me to have certain feelings or wishes or tension. I feel these tensions from the play as tensions in myself, but, both intellectually and emotionally, I attribute these tensions to the characters as motives; I project or bestow my feelings on the characters.”²⁹ Thus, it is the reader who makes the characters real, who recreates the character from the words on the page; the characters, in a sense, “take on a life of their own.”³⁰

Joel Weinsheimer advocates a mediating position: “One may talk about ‘Emma’ as if it were a word in a closed, alienated text, or as if she were alive, a person in an open world that is also our world. It is not ridiculous, but it is inadequate and partial to adopt either mode of expression exclusively.”³¹ He prefers to talk about “textualized persons” or “personi-

²⁴ Chatman, *Story*, 118.

²⁵ See Chatman, *Story*, 117–18; Price, *Forms of Life*, 40–41, 56–58.

²⁶ Martin interestingly observes that “Fiction is like gossip. I hear verbal reports of the traits and acts of a person who circulates at the edge of my acquaintance. These I piece together with bits of personal observation. From all such fragments, I project a whole: what kind of person is she? A character in fiction or the character of a person in fact is a conjectural configuration” (*Theories*, 119–20).

²⁷ Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 267.

²⁸ Holland, *Dynamics*, 267.

²⁹ Holland, *Dynamics*, 274.

³⁰ Holland, *Dynamics*, 272, 277.

³¹ Joel Weinsheimer, “Theory of Character: Emma,” *Poetics Today* 1 (1979): 208.

fied texts.”³² Only this dual understanding can account for the nature of characters: “Characters are both people and words. No other account of their status is satisfying or complete. A character is neither reducible to words nor independent of them.”³³

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan also believes that characters can be viewed both as persons and as textual entities.³⁴ These two contrasting views can be reconciled if one realizes that one is dealing with two different aspects of narrative fiction. As Rimmon-Kenan explains, “In the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are—by definition—non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modeled on the reader’s conception of people and in this they are person-like.”³⁵ Moreover, Rimmon-Kenan relates, “in the text, characters are inextricable from the rest of the design, whereas in the story they are extracted from their textuality.”³⁶

Frederick Burnett agrees with this two-fold understanding of character. He notes that if character is a construct developed during the reading process, then character is an *effect* of reading. Readers infer traits from the verbal indicators in the text and thus construct characters.³⁷ Burnett draws out the implications:

To say that “character” is a construct developed during the reading process means, on the one hand, that character can be reduced to textuality. It can be dissolved into the segments of a closed text and/or the motifs from which it was constructed. The process of construction, in other words, can be reversed . . . On the other hand, character as an *effect* of the reading

³² Weinsheimer, “Theory of Character,” 208.

³³ Weinsheimer, “Theory of Character,” 210.

³⁴ Marvin Mudrick distinguishes between two opposing views: the *purist* argument which holds that characters do not exist apart from their literary context, and the *realist* argument which contends that characters acquire an independence from the plots in which they occur and that they can be discussed apart from their literary context. He explains that the purists have trouble with Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the great novelists whose characters exhibit great individual vitality, but the realists have trouble talking about characters as real persons with most dramatists and writers of allegory; see “Character and Event in Fiction,” *Yale Review* 50 (1960–1961): 210–211. William Shepherd dubs the two approaches as the *semiotic* view—“characters are no more than signs which have certain functions in the text”—and the *mimetic* view—“art imitates life and characters are much like real people” (*Narrative Function*, 53).

³⁵ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2d ed.; London: Routledge, 2002), 35.

³⁶ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 35.

³⁷ Fred W. Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels,” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 5.

process can “transcend” the text. “Character” as a paradigm of attributive propositions can give the illusion of individuality or even personality to the reader.³⁸

A closely-related problem dealing with characters is the relationship between characters and plot. On the one side, there are those who treat characters as *autonomous beings* with their own traits and personalities. On the other side, there are those who view characters as *plot functionaries* who merely fulfill certain roles in the story.³⁹ Chatman is an advocate of the first position; he argues for an open theory of character in which “character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse, through whatever medium.”⁴⁰ Maren Elwood also advocates for the primacy of character. She says “the *characters* are more important than their problems; more important than plot, though both of these are *essential* to any worth-while piece of fiction.”⁴¹ Later she remarks that

plot is secondary to characterization. Events and action, *in themselves*, have no significance and consequently no interest. It is only as events and action *affect* people that they become really interesting. Even then, interest is slight until we know something about the people—that is, until they are characterized and, therefore, become for us *alive*.⁴²

Elizabeth Bowen even goes so far as to say that authors do not create characters, they discover or recognize them; they reveal themselves slowly to the writer as the plot unfolds. Hence, characters exist *outside* the action of the plot, which only exists to reveal the characters.⁴³

At the other extreme are those who completely subordinate character to plot. This view can be found as early as Aristotle. When discussing tragedy Aristotle states that the most important element is plot (μῦθος), that is, the arrangement of incidents (ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις):

The most important of these is the arrangement of the incidents, for tragedy is not a representation (μίμησις) of men but of a piece of action, of life, of happiness and unhappiness, which come under the head of action (πρᾶξις), and the end aimed at is the representation not of qualities of character (ἥθη)

³⁸ Burnett, “Characterization,” 5.

³⁹ Chatman, *Story*, 119.

⁴⁰ Chatman, *Story*, 119.

⁴¹ Maren Elwood, *Characters Make Your Story* (Boston: The Writer, 1942), 1 (italics hers).

⁴² Elwood, *Characters*, 2 (italics hers).

⁴³ Elizabeth Bowen, “Notes on Writing a Novel” in *Collected Impressions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), 251.

but of some action; and while character makes men what they are, it is their actions and experiences that make them happy or the opposite. They do not therefore act to represent character, but character-study is included for the sake of the action. It follows that the incidents and the plot are the end at which tragedy aims, and in everything the end aimed at is of prime importance.⁴⁴

Aristotle's view was influential in ancient times, but eventually opinion began to shift towards the view that character was more important than plot. It was not until the twentieth century that some theorists began again to view character as subordinate to plot.

Russian formalists considered characters as plot functionaries.⁴⁵ Vladimir Propp, for example, in his examination of Russian folktales, notes that the names of the persons in the stories may change, but "neither their actions nor functions change." From this he infers that "a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale *according to the functions of its dramatis personae*."⁴⁶ He proceeds to enumerate thirty-one different functions⁴⁷ which he then groups into seven "spheres of action": villain, donor, helper, sought-for person, dispatcher, hero, and false hero.⁴⁸ In any given story a character may fulfill more than one role; conversely, one role may be filled by more than one character.

French structuralists have generally followed the formalists in their view of character. For instance, A. J. Greimas identifies characters as *actants* who fulfill a particular function within a narrative. Working off the insights of Propp, Greimas categorizes actants into six actantial positions: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opposer.⁴⁹ He diagrams the six positions thus:

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.12–13. The translation is from: *The Poetics* (trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe; rev. ed.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

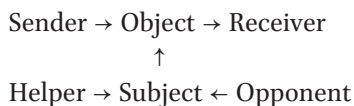
⁴⁵ Chatman, *Story*, 111–12; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 36.

⁴⁶ V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (trans. Laurence Scott; 2d ed.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 20 (italics his).

⁴⁷ Propp, *Folktale*, 25–65.

⁴⁸ Propp, *Folktale*, 79–80.

⁴⁹ A.-J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie; Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 202–7. Greimas' schema has been applied to the analysis of certain Pauline passages by Richard Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 82–117; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 204–214; and Edward Adams, "Paul's Story of God and Creation," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 19–43. R. Barry Matlock, however, is critical of this approach in "The Arrow and the Web" in *Narrative Dynamics*



The basic scheme is that the sender commissions the subject in search of a valuable object which must be given to the receiver. Along the way the subject may encounter aids (helpers) or obstacles (opponents) in the quest. An actantial position may be filled by more than one actor (French: *acteur*); conversely, an actor may perform more than one actantial function. Robert Funk adopts this basic understanding of characters, which he designates as *participants* in his biblical poetics. Participants are analyzed only in accordance with their function in the syntactical structure of the text.⁵⁰

Again, Rimmon-Kenan believes that the two views can be reconciled. Instead of conceiving character or plot as subordinate to one another, they can be viewed as interdependent.⁵¹ Henry James certainly had this idea when he queried, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"⁵² Laurence Perrine colorfully describes plot and character as the two ends of a seesaw: "the two are one substance; there can be no movement at one end without movement at the other."⁵³

Plot or characters may predominate depending on the type of literary work involved. Edwin Muir distinguishes between *novels of character* and *novels of action* (or *incident*, to use Henry James' term).⁵⁴ In the novels

in *Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 48–50.

⁵⁰ For example, see pages 63–66, 166–67 in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1988).

⁵¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 37. Jeffrey Fleck argues that there is a tension between characters and plot. Characters serve two masters: "an ideology of character external to the narrative, and the narrative discourse itself with its own needs and requirements." This tension is often kept in a state of equilibrium. Thus, for example, "Sarasine . . . keeps his rendezvous with La Zambinella because he is passionate, but he is passionate because the plot and theme of the novella require a passionate protagonist"; see *Character in Context: Studies in the Fiction of Abramovitsh, Brenner, and Agnon* (BJS 45; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 36.

⁵² Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 13.

⁵³ Laurence Perrine, with Thomas R. Arp, *Story and Structure* (6th ed.; San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 65.

⁵⁴ Edwin Muir, *The Structure of the Novel* (London: Hogarth, 1928), 20–25. Muir also identifies the dramatic novel in which neither characters nor plot dominates, but "both are inseparably knit together. The given qualities of the characters determine the action,

of action, the “action is the main thing, the response of the characters to it incidental, and always as to help the plot.”⁵⁵ Character is revealed only in terms of advancing the plot. In the novels of character, by contrast, “characters are not conceived as parts of the plot; on the contrary they exist independently, and the action is subservient to them.”⁵⁶ Action exists only insofar as to reveal the characters in the story. Tzvetan Todorov also distinguishes between character-centered or *psychological* narratives, in which actions are expressions or symptoms of personality, and plot-centered or *a-psychological* novels, in which actions are important in their own right.⁵⁷ Martin remarks that “the modern theorist offers a variable equation (this one from Genette): $A \times C = k$ (action times character equals a constant). Emphasis on action or plot—for example, in the detective novel—leaves little space or need for complexity of character. Everyday incidents become interesting if complex characters participate in them.”⁵⁸

Rimmon-Kenan also points out that character or plot can take primacy depending on where the critic’s focus of attention may be: “characters may be subordinated to action when action is the centre of attention, but action can become subordinate to character as soon as the reader’s interest shifts to the latter.” Different foci may govern different readings of the same text. “Hence,” Rimmon-Kenan concludes, “it is legitimate to subordinate character to action when we study action but equally legitimate to subordinate action to character when the latter is the focus of our study.”⁵⁹

Returning to the definition given above, we have seen that character is a construct. It can be said that authors *construct* characters, but readers *reconstruct* them.⁶⁰ Authors can construct characters by a variety of techniques (these techniques will be explored further below). Readers, however, reconstruct characters. Since readers, in most cases, are not able

and the action in turn progressively changes the characters, and thus everything is borne forward to the end” (41).

⁵⁵ Muir, *Structure*, 20.

⁵⁶ Muir, *Structure*, 23–24.

⁵⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (trans. Richard Howard; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 67.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Theories*, 117.

⁵⁹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 38.

⁶⁰ Powell says that “implied authors” construct characters and that “implied readers” reconstruct them (*Narrative Criticism*, 51–52). However, I would contend that since implied authors and implied readers are constructs in themselves, they cannot construct or reconstruct characters; it is real authors and real readers who do the construction or reconstruction.

to interrogate authors as to what their intent was when constructing particular characters in their stories, readers must examine the textual clues that the author leaves in order to reconstruct characters. It is likely that readers will never be able to reproduce exactly what the author had in mind when constructing particular characters; any reconstruction that readers come up with can only be an approximation. It goes without saying that different readers will come up with different reconstructions of the characters of a given text. Nevertheless, in order for the reconstruction to be convincing, readers must be constrained by the textual parameters. Those reconstructions which best account for all of the textual data will be more convincing than others which fail to do so.

The next component of the definition mentions the *totality of traits and attributes*. The *totality* of traits and attributes are those that can be discerned within any given story. Naturally, no story is able to portray all of the possible traits that a character may have. Some character traits may be dominant in a particular story, others may be peripheral, and others simply too unimportant for the purposes of the story to be mentioned. *Totality* thus refers to the composite picture that can be reconstructed about a particular character in a given story. Naturally, this will mean that some characters will be more fully developed than others.

What is a *trait*? Chatman offers the helpful definition of J. P. Guilford: “any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from others.”⁶¹ There are two important aspects of this definition. First, a trait helps us to differentiate one character from another. While it is true that a particular trait may be common to many individuals, it is the combination of traits that ultimately helps to distinguish one character from another and thus create a sense of individuality or uniqueness. Second, a trait is a persistent quality. A one-time action may not necessarily be indicative of an individual’s character.⁶² Chatman, however, distinguishes between *traits* and *habits*; character is more like a “system of interdependent habits.”⁶³ He gives an example: “if a character is constantly washing his hands, mopping already clean floors, picking motes of dust off his furniture, the audience is obliged to read out a trait like

⁶¹ Chatman, *Story*, 121; J. P. Guilford, *Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 6.

⁶² Rimmon-Kenan, though, says that traits may be implied by one-time actions. Although, a one-time action may not indicate constant qualities, it is still characteristic of the character (*Narrative Fiction*, 63). See discussion below on indirect presentation, action.

⁶³ Chatman, *Story*, 122.

'compulsive.'"⁶⁴ Chatman also helpfully points out that traits must be distinguished from temporary psychological phenomena such as thoughts, moods, emotions, attitudes, and so forth.⁶⁵ These phenomena are characteristic of all persons, but a particularly persistent attitude or mood can be indicative of a character trait.

Normally, traits are identified with intellectual (e.g., intelligent, wise, artistic), moral (e.g., honest, upright, humble), or social (e.g., friendly, loving, kind) qualities. This is why the definition includes the term *attributes*. The category of *attributes* includes name, age, gender, physical appearance, ethnicity, social location, or any other dimension of personhood that does not fall under the category of traits. In the Bible, age is an important detail in the Abraham and Joseph stories. Physical appearance certainly contributes to our understanding of Joseph, Leah, Rachel, Saul, David, or Esther. Ethnicity surely plays an important role in comprehending Uriah or Ruth or Rahab. Social location assuredly contributes to construal of biblical characters, whether they are prophets, priests, kings, peasants, or prostitutes. So, although attributes may not contribute to understanding the "personality" of a literary figure, they certainly do contribute to his or her character.

Readers normally construct character around proper names. As Rimmon-Kenan puts it, names are the "fundamental cohesive factor" around which adjectives, attributes, and predicates accumulate.⁶⁶ This corresponds with the secondary definition of character given above as the locus of the totality of traits and attributes. Rimmon-Kenan identifies four principles of cohesion for combining elements "into unifying categories under the aegis of the proper name": (1) the repetition of the same behavior, (2) similarities of behavior on different occasions, (3) contrast, and (4) implication.⁶⁷

Leitch gives a caveat about defining characters merely as a collection of traits.⁶⁸ Characters are more than the sum of their traits. We should not think of characters as a collection of traits anymore than we think about real people in this way. So, whereas we might attribute certain traits to Moses, or David, or Job, we do not think of them as aggregates of traits, but as personalities or individuals in their own right. Somehow, characters

⁶⁴ Chatman, *Story*, 122.

⁶⁵ Chatman, *Story*, 126.

⁶⁶ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 41.

⁶⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 41–42.

⁶⁸ Leitch, *Stories*, 157–58.

transcend the mere words on a page to become a living reality in our consciousnesses.

The next component of the definition states that the totality of traits and attributes belongs to *human and non-human figures*. Usually, when we think of characters, we think of human beings. But characters can include a host of other non-human entities as well, including supernatural beings (e.g., God, gods, angels, demons), imaginary beings (e.g., hobbits, elves, dwarves; Vulcans, Klingons, Romulans), artificial intelligence (e.g., robots, androids, computers), real (e.g., monkeys, bears) or imaginary (e.g., unicorns, dragons) animals, plant life, forces of nature, or even abstract ideas (e.g., love, virtue, truth). In fact, almost any object, real or imagined, can conceivably become a character, as long as it has personifying characteristics. Indeed, in the Bible, not only does God, Satan, and angels become characters in biblical narratives, but we can also find examples of animals (the serpent in Gen 3; Balaam's donkey in Num 22:28–30), plants (Judg 9:7–15), abstract ideas (wisdom in Prov 1:20–33; 8:1–36), and perhaps even heavenly bodies (Gen 37:9) being made into characters.

In addition, groups of people or crowds can function as one character. In ancient Greek dramas, the chorus often functioned as one character. In the Bible we can find several examples of groups or crowds functioning as one character: Joseph's brothers or the congregation of Israel in the Pentateuch, or the disciples, the religious leaders, or the crowds in the gospels. In such instances, Jerome Walsh explains that "Individuals within the group are not differentiated and only the group itself has any real role."⁶⁹ On occasion, though, one member of the group can act as a spokesperson for the whole group. Walsh remarks that "that individual is not really a 'character' in his or her own right, but is only, so to speak, the face of the group."⁷⁰

Finally, the last part of the definition states that characters are found in *stories*. *Story* is a more all-encompassing term than *narrative*. Stories can be told through a wide variety of literary genres. They can be told as fables (e.g., Aesop), prose novels (e.g., Cervantes, Dickens, Tolstoy), poetry (e.g., Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Chaucer), or drama (e.g., Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Ibsen). Stories can also be told in non-fiction genres such as history, biography, memoirs/diaries, or news accounts. This brings us to

⁶⁹ Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative*, 25.

⁷⁰ Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative*, 25.

non-narrative genres such as letters, speeches/sermons, and treatises. Do these types of literature tell stories?

Letters can certainly be an effective means of telling stories. This is evidenced by the fact that some modern novels have used the epistolary form for telling a story. In the ancient world, David Aune indicates that "The letter form exhibited great flexibility. . . . Virtually any type of written text could be sent to individuals or groups in an epistolary format."⁷¹ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* is a perfect example of a narrative genre that has been set in an epistolary framework. Aune notes that fictional letters used epistolary conventions to frame human interest stories, or were composed for insertion into historical and fictional narratives.⁷² Moreover, the discursive style of many letters did not preclude the insertion of story material. Paul's letter to the Galatians 1:11–2:21 is a fine example of this procedure. Here Paul tells a story about how he became an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul often included autobiographical material in his letters (2 Cor 11:22–33; 12:1–10; Phil 3:4–11), but he also told stories about Christ (Phil 2:6–11; 1 Cor 15:20–28), Israel (Rom 9–11; 1 Cor 10:1–5; Gal 4:22–31), the origins of the early Christian church (1 Cor 15:1–11), and Gentiles (Rom 1:18–32). It is clear then that, although these are not full-blown narratives, they assume a story behind the discourse.

There are a number of studies that have approached the letters in the NT from a narrative perspective. In his groundbreaking work, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, Richard Hays avers that Paul's argumentation in his letters is founded upon the story about Jesus Christ.⁷³ Hays says that "the framework of Paul's thought is constituted neither by a system of doctrines nor by his personal religious experience but by a 'sacred story,' a narrative structure."⁷⁴ Hays bases his methodology upon the theories of Northrop Frye, Paul Ricoeur, and Robert Funk. Frye distinguishes between *mythos*, the sequential order of the plot of a literary work, and *dianoia*, the thematic pattern of the whole work. The theme or meaning of a work is not detachable from the narrative but is integral to the narrative as

⁷¹ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 158.

⁷² Aune, *Literary Environment*, 166, 168–69.

⁷³ Hays' monograph originally was published in 1983 and remains unchanged in the second edition, but a new introduction and appendices were added to the book. Bruce Longenecker states that "Despite precursors . . . it was Hays who put the issue of narrative contours explicitly on the agenda of Pauline study"; see "Narrative Interest in the Study of Paul" in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 6.

⁷⁴ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 6.

a whole.⁷⁵ Similarly, Paul Ricoeur discerns a fundamental relationship between, what he calls, the episodic and configurational dimensions of a narrative. The significance of a story is not contained in a series of successive events, but in the configuration of the whole story.⁷⁶ Robert Funk differentiates between *foundational language* which “founds a world” and *primary reflectivity* which reflects upon this language in a new context.⁷⁷ Hays concludes his discussion with a summation:⁷⁸

- (1) There can be an organic relationship between stories and reflective discourse because stories have an inherent configurational dimension (*dianoia*) which not only permits but also demands restatement and interpretation in non-narrative language.
- (2) The reflective statement does not simply repeat the plot (*mythos*) of the story; nonetheless, the story shapes and constrains the reflective process because the *dianoia* can never be entirely abstracted from the story in which it is manifested and apprehended.
- (3) Hence, when we encounter this type of reflective discourse, it is legitimate and possible to inquire about the story in which it is rooted.

Hays advocates a two-step procedure in examining the narrative substructure of Paul’s letters. First, one should “identify within the discourse allusions to the story and seek to discern its general outlines.” Second, one should “ask how this story shapes the logic of argumentation in the discourse.”⁷⁹

In his seminal work, *Rediscovering Paul*, Norman Petersen explores the narrative world of Paul using his letter to Philemon as a test case.⁸⁰ The *narrative world* is “the world referred to in the Letter to Philemon and the world referred to in the total corpus of Paul’s letters.”⁸¹ The *narrative* or *referential world* is distinguished from the *contextual world*, which refers to the historical context in which a literary work was written. In narrative genres there is usually a difference between the referential world and the contextual world, since narratives can often tell stories that take place within a different time and place than the time and place in which

⁷⁵ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 22–23.

⁷⁶ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 24–25.

⁷⁷ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 26–27.

⁷⁸ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 28.

⁷⁹ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 29.

⁸⁰ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*.

⁸¹ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 1.

it is written. In letters this distinction collapses; as Petersen explains, "The only history *referred to* in a letter is its contextual history, which is the total history envisioned by the writer as relevant for the letter."⁸² Thus, one can only reconstruct the actual history behind a letter from the referential or narrative world of the letter. Both narratives and letters have referential worlds, but the way they refer to them differs. This difference goes back to the distinction between story and discourse. Story refers to the content (events, characters, settings) of a literary work, while discourse refers to the means by which the content is communicated.⁸³ Petersen indicates that in narrative "the form of story dominates the discursive presentation of the message," while in letters the story is subordinated to the presentation of the message.⁸⁴

Petersen has developed an ingenious method for constructing stories from letters and then using those stories in turn for understanding the message of the letters. He begins by identifying the actions referred to or implied in a letter and then arranges them according to their logical and chronological order. He refers to this arrangement as their *chronological or referential sequence*.⁸⁵ He then correlates the referential sequence to the *poetic sequence* of the text, which refers to "the sequence of the events as they appear in the text."⁸⁶ By juxtaposing these two sequences side by side, one can readily detect which actions the author chose to discuss and the ways in which he relates these actions to one another. Petersen notes that "comparison of the two sequences provides us with access to the writer's formal plot devices and the rhetorical sequence they serve."⁸⁷ A close examination of the events plotted and their sequence reveals both the central actions in the story and their motivations.⁸⁸

These two pioneering works on the narrative world of Paul triggered a proliferation of studies that examine narrative dimensions of the Pauline letters.⁸⁹ We do not have the space to consider all these studies in detail,

⁸² Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 8.

⁸³ Chatman, *Story*, 19.

⁸⁴ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 9.

⁸⁵ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 48.

⁸⁶ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 48.

⁸⁷ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 48.

⁸⁸ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 51.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and the Story of Jesus," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays* (ed. Alexander J. M. Wedderburn; JSNTSup 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 161–89; Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*; idem, *The*

but it is important to note that it is now commonplace in Pauline studies to talk about Paul's narrative or story world.⁹⁰ Scholars recognize several narrative components in Paul's story world, including God and creation, Christ, Israel, Gentiles, Paul, and the Church.⁹¹

Eugene Boring appears to be the first scholar to approach the letter of 1 Peter from a narratological standpoint.⁹² Boring grounds his study of 1 Peter with a series of methodological theses which will be summarized here:⁹³

1. Some of the narratological insights recently employed in the study of the Gospels and Acts may be fruitfully applied to the epistles, including pseudepigraphical letters.
2. Every real letter projects a narrative world.
3. The narrative world is comprised of all the events projected by the letter.
4. A catalogue may be constructed listing all the events in the letter's narrative world.

New Testament and the People of God; Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*; Frank Thielman, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Roman 5–8," in *Pauline Theology, Volume III: Romans* (eds. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 169–95; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (JSNTSup 181; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); idem, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics*; A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Thomas Stegman, *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin to Paul's Argument in 2 Corinthians* (AnBib 158; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005); David A. Brondos, *Paul on the Cross: Reconstructing the Apostle's Story of Redemption* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006); Kar Yong Lim, 'The Sufferings of Christ Are Abundant in Us' (2 Corinthians 1.5): *A Narrative Dynamics Investigation of Paul's Sufferings in 2 Corinthians* (LNTS 399; London: T & T Clark, 2009).

⁹⁰ Bruce Longenecker states that the "language of narrative is now emerging in Pauline scholarship with sufficient frequency that it is no longer novel to speak of a narrative dimension in Paul's theologising. Narrative is now mentioned regularly in diverse contexts in the study of Paul" (*Narrative Dynamics*, 10). Surveys of narrative approaches to Paul can be found in Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics*, 1–16, 45–47 and Lim, *Sufferings of Christ*, 15–24.

⁹¹ E.g., Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 79, 407; Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 5; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 18; Matera, *New Testament Christology*, 86; Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics in Paul*, 12–13.

⁹² Boring, "Narrative Dynamics," 7–40. On page 14 Boring remarks that "For the most part, scholarship on 1 Peter has yet to take narratological perspectives into account."

⁹³ Boring, "Narrative Dynamics," 14–24.

5. The list may be arranged into a chronology, which represents the narrative world of the letter.
6. In the communication event in which the letter is composed, sent and read, the narrative world projected by the letter functions kerygmatically, didactically and paraenetically.

These theses are quite applicable to the book of Hebrews as well. They will be particularly helpful when we consider the deeds and events of Jesus' life that are projected by the book of Hebrews.

Closely related to letters are speeches, sermons, and treatises since they also employ non-narrative, discursive language. Letters were often meant for oral delivery and would employ rhetoric and other devices of orality. In this respect letters do not differ all that much from speeches and sermons. Speeches could employ a *narratio* or διήγησις, a statement of facts involved in a case.⁹⁴ Moreover, as we have seen with letters, speeches often assume a story world behind its discourse.

David Gowler points out that there are two basic approaches to the study of character:⁹⁵

The first, classification of characters, investigates the similarities of character portrayals and tends to categorize characters in various types or groups. The second, models for evaluating character, concentrates on individual characters and how they are presented in specific texts. Both of these procedures are necessary, because characters must be examined on general terms and in characters' specific manifestation.

We will examine both techniques in what follows.

Kinds of Characters

In 1927 E. M. Forster made the famous distinction between *flat* and *round* characters. *Flat* characters are "constructed round a single idea or quality."⁹⁶ They can be easily described in one sentence, and are easily recognized and remembered by readers.⁹⁷ Flat characters do not change during the

⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.16; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.8.12–16; Cicero, *De inventione* 1.19.27–30; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.2. Διήγησις was also one of the elements taught in the *progymnasmata*: Theon, 78–96; Hermogenes, 4–6; Aphthonius, 22; Nicolaus, 11–17.

⁹⁵ David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (ESEC 2; New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 49.

⁹⁶ Forster, *Novel*, 67.

⁹⁷ Forster, *Novel*, 68–69.

course of the story and thus they are predictable. Flat characters are often caricatures or types and usually are minor characters. *Round* characters are more complex. They have more than one trait and are subject to change. They are unpredictable and thus may surprise the reader. They cannot be summed up in one sentence. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon helpfully clarifies Forster's categories. The distinction between flat and round is not the same as the distinction between minor and major characters.⁹⁸ Many major characters do not change. For example, Odysseus does not change during the course of his journeys; he remains the same "wily Odysseus." One may even question whether Jesus is a flat character in the gospels since presumably he does not change. Conceivably, minor characters could be round if they undergo some sort of change within a story. Neither should the flat/round distinction be equated with positive/negative.⁹⁹ Both flat and round characters can be negative or positive.

These clarifications suggest that Forster's distinction between flat and round characters, though influential, is simplistic and inadequate. This can be verified by looking at Forster's own definition of flat characters: he notes that "when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve toward the round."¹⁰⁰ Can we then speak of *curved* characters as some sort of intermediate type of character?¹⁰¹ Rimmon-Kenan elaborates on the weaknesses of Forster's categories:

(1) The term 'flat' suggests something two-dimensional, devoid of depth and 'life', while in fact many flat characters, like those of Dickens, are not only felt as very much 'alive' but also create the impression of depth. (2) The dichotomy is highly reductive, obliterating the degrees and nuances found in actual works of narrative fiction. (3) Forster seems to confuse two criteria which do not always overlap. According to him, a flat character is both simple and undeveloping, whereas a round character is both complex and developing. Although these criteria often co-exist, there are fictional characters which are complex but undeveloping (e.g. Joyce's Bloom) and others which are simple but developing (e.g. the allegorical Everyman). Moreover, the lack of development can be presented as arrested develop-

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?" in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (eds. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 29.

⁹⁹ Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 29.

¹⁰⁰ Forster, *Novel*, 67.

¹⁰¹ Walsh explains that "Forster's proposal is helpful, but it should not be understood as establishing two distinct categories of characters; rather, 'flat' and 'round' are two points on a continuum of complexity from highly developed, many-sided characters down to those so simply drawn as to be little more than animated props" (*Old Testament Narrative*, 24).

ment resulting from some psychic trauma, as in the case of Miss Havisham in Dicken's *Great Expectations* (1860/61), thus endowing a static character with complexity.¹⁰²

The inadequacy of Forster's distinctions can be underscored by enumerating the proliferation of terms used by literary critics and biblical scholars to describe characters. The following are solo types of characters. Most of these types are minor and/or static characters:

Stock:¹⁰³ Stereotyped figures who have appeared so frequently in literature that they are easily recognizable; they may have only one or two traits.

Foil:¹⁰⁴ Characters who provide a contrast to highlight the distinctive characteristics of another.

Walk-on:¹⁰⁵ Characters who are not fully delineated or individualized; they are part of the background or setting.

Background:¹⁰⁶ Characters who have a functional role, but have nothing to do with the unfolding of the plot.

The following are pairs of types of characters. While these classifications tend toward the same problem of oversimplification as Forster's categories, they could be viewed along a continuum:

Simple:¹⁰⁷ Shows one dominant character trait; usually a major character.

Complex: Has two or more strong, contradictory, or conflicting character traits; always the major character and is usually the hero.

Static:¹⁰⁸ Character does not change in the course of the narrative.

Dynamic or *Developing*: Character undergoes a permanent change in the course of the narrative.

Primary ("Main"):¹⁰⁹ Essential characters who may change in their personal traits or circumstances in the course of the plot. Or they may remain the same in "didactic works."

¹⁰² Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 42–43.

¹⁰³ Perrine, *Story*, 67; Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124; Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 102; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 55.

¹⁰⁴ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124.

¹⁰⁵ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124.

¹⁰⁶ Elwood, *Characters*, 130.

¹⁰⁷ Elwood, *Characters*, 129.

¹⁰⁸ Perrine, *Story*, 67; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 55; Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 125; William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (10th ed. based on earlier editions by William Flint Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 92.

¹⁰⁹ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 14. Springer discerns three other types of characters: (1) The *Suppressed* character who slowly emerges through the course of the narrative, thus keeping

Secondary ("Minor"): Characters whose function is necessary for the narrative, but who change minimally or remain static; they serve to complement the primary characters.

Adele Berlin classifies characters according to three types:¹¹⁰

Full-fledged: This type corresponds to round characters. They have a broad range of traits and are more realistically portrayed. Their emotions and motives can be ascertained either explicitly or implicitly. Readers can usually identify with them.

Type: This type corresponds to flat characters. They have a limited and stereotyped range of traits; they represent the class of people with these traits.

Agents: These are functionaries of the plot or part of the setting. They are not important in themselves. Nothing of their emotions or motives is revealed. The reader usually cannot relate to them as people.

According to Berlin, a character can function in different ways. For example, Bathsheba is an agent in 2 Sam 11–12, but emerges as a full-fledged character in 1 Kgs 1–2.¹¹¹ Berlin, however, recognizes that there is no fine distinction between the different types of characters. It is better to think of them as points on a continuum.¹¹²

Harvey, likewise, recognizes that characters exist along a spectrum; some characters "stand in a full light, others remain shadowy, still others advance and retreat in our consciousness as readers."¹¹³ Nevertheless, Harvey groups characters into three classifications for the sake of convenience:

Protagonists: These are the central characters who are the most fully established in the story. They experience conflict and change in the course of the story and most fully engage the reader. The novel exists to reveal them.¹¹⁴

Intermediate Figures: (1) *Ficelles*: These characters are more fully developed than background characters, but are primarily used to serve some function in the plot such as to be a foil for the protagonist.¹¹⁵ (2) *The Card*:

the reader in a state of suspense (69); (2) the *Extra* character who may initially appear interesting, but ultimately is unnecessary to the central purpose of the story (77); and (3) *The Frame* character who is always a minor character who exists to define or illuminate the protagonist (122).

¹¹⁰ Berlin, *Poetics*, 23–24, 31–32.

¹¹¹ Berlin, *Poetics*, 25–30. Gunn and Fewell similarly argue that in "biblical literature, round and flat characterizations often shift. A flat character in one episode may become a round character in the next and vice versa" (*Narrative*, 75–76).

¹¹² Berlin, *Poetics*, 32.

¹¹³ Harvey, *Character*, 55–56.

¹¹⁴ Harvey, *Character*, 56.

¹¹⁵ Harvey, *Character*, 62–68.

This character has a “larger-than-life” quality, but is usually not the hero of the novel.¹¹⁶

Background Characters: These characters may have brief moments of “intensity and depth” or they may be anonymous. They may serve to move the plot along, or they may just be part of the setting in which the character lives and moves.¹¹⁷

Cornelis Bennema categorizes characters along a continuum according to the *degree of characterization*: (1) an agent, actant, or walk-on; (2) a type, stock, or flat character; (3) a character with personality; or (4) an individual or person.¹¹⁸

David Galef, in his study of flat and minor characters, divides minor characters into three groups, or better, as points along a continuum, according to their relative importance:¹¹⁹

Cameos: Characters who appear as mere names or phrases

Bit parts: Characters who have a few sentences about them or a brief description

Minor roles: Characters who have some hand in the plot and theme

Galef also proceeds to classify minor characters according to their function. The first seven are structurally functional: they perform an active job in the unfolding of the narrative. The last five are mimetically functional and serve to bring verisimilitude to a story. Overlapping of the categories is possible:¹²⁰

Structural types:

Narrators and Expositors: Characters who tell a part or the entire story.

Interrupters: Characters who break up action or dialogue

Symbols and Allegories: Characters who have symbolic or allegorical significance

Enablers or Agents of Action: Characters who enable certain plot functions to take place

Foils and Contrasts: Characters who set off major characters or situations

Doubles or Doppelgängers: Characters who are mirror images

Emphasizers: Characters who stress another character’s words or the ethos of a group

¹¹⁶ Harvey, *Character*, 58–62.

¹¹⁷ Harvey, *Character*, 58.

¹¹⁸ Cornelis Bennema, “A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature,” *BibInt* 17 (2009): 407.

¹¹⁹ David Galef, *The Supporting Cast: A Study of Flat and Minor Characters* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 12.

¹²⁰ Galef, *Supporting Cast*, 16–21.

Mimetic types:

Eccentrics: Colorful characters; corresponds to Harvey's "Cards"

Friends, Enemies, Acquaintances

Family

People, Chorus, Upper and Lower Classes, Background

Subhuman: Animals, Objects, Places

The range of terminology used to differentiate types of characters demonstrates the complexity of classification. It is better to view characters as existing along a spectrum or continuum of interrelated characteristics. Gerald Prince observes that characters can be defined by their actions, words, or feelings, or classified by the functions they fulfill, or by their prominence in the narrative. He notes that "whether they are protagonists or not, senders or receivers, heroes or villains, mainly defined by their actions or by their feelings, characters can be dynamic . . . or static . . . consistent . . . or inconsistent . . . round or flat . . . complex or simple, multidimensional or unidimensional, capable of surprising us or incapable of it."¹²¹

Basing her argument on the work of Joseph Ewen, Rimmon-Kenan advocates for the plotting of characters along three axes. On the first axis of *complexity*, characters are categorized according to whether they are constructed around a single trait (such as allegorical figures, caricatures, or types) or around multiple traits. On the second axis of *development*, characters can be plotted in terms of how static or dynamic they are. The third axis plots the amount of *penetration into the "inner life"* of the character the reader is allowed to perceive, from those whose story is told from within their consciousness to those who remain opaque to the readers.¹²²

Hochman provides the most elaborate taxonomy of categories to account for the complexity of qualities and possibilities available in developing character. He defines eight categories with their polar opposites which are placed on opposite ends of a scale:¹²³

Stylization/Naturalism: The degree of realism in portraying characters.

Coherence/Incoherence: The degree of consistency in the characters.

¹²¹ Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Janua Linguarum 108; Berlin: Mouton, 1982), 72–73.

¹²² Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 43–44. Cornelis Bennema applies this approach to the classification of characters in John's Gospel ("Theory of Character," 402–10; *Encountering Jesus*).

¹²³ Hochman, *Character*, 89. Hochman elaborates upon this taxonomy on pages 89–140.

Wholeness/Fragmentariness: The degree of completeness in the characterization.

Literalness/Symbolism: The degree of whether a character is self-referential or is representative of something outside itself. It coincides with individuality versus type.

Complexity/Simplicity: The degree of the complexity of traits portrayed in a character.

Transparency/Opacity: The degree to which the inner world of the character is accessible to the reader.

Dynamism/Staticism: The degree of change which a character undergoes in the course of a narrative.

Closure/Openness: The degree to which a character experiences closure or resolution by the end of the narrative.

Some literary theorists have attempted to outline criteria for determining certain types of characters. For example, Bal lists five criteria for identifying the hero of a narrative:¹²⁴

1. Qualification: there is comprehensive information about the hero's appearance, psychology, motivations, past.
2. Distribution: the hero occurs often in the story and is present at key moments in the story.
3. Independence: the hero can occur alone and hold monologues.
4. Function: certain actions are performed by the hero alone.
5. Relations: the hero maintains relations with the largest number of characters.

Techniques of Characterization

We turn now to consider the variety of techniques used in order to develop the characterization of a literary figure. According to David Daiches, there are three basic ways of presenting character. (1) The author begins with a complete descriptive portrait of the character. The remainder of the narrative elaborates upon and confirms the initial portrait. (2) The author gives no initial description of the character, but lets the character emerge as the story proceeds. A complete portrait of the character cannot be ascertained until the end of the story. (3) The author begins with a valid portrait of the character, but shows the character changing, so that the initial portrait no longer remains valid by the end.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Bal, *Narratology*, 132.

¹²⁵ David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World* (rev. ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 21. See also pages 12–13.

There are two basic techniques for characterization. The first is *direct presentation*: the narrator intervenes in the story to comment directly on a character through description, exposition, analysis, or evaluation. Rimmon-Kenan points out that the “naming of a character’s qualities counts as direct characterization only if it proceeds from the most authoritative voice in the text.”¹²⁶ The second is *indirect presentation*: the narrator displays the character’s traits through a variety of means such as action or speech; readers must make inferences about what the character is like. These two methods correspond respectively to what is more commonly known as *telling* and *showing*.¹²⁷ Perrine points out that the “method of direct presentation has the advantages of being clear and economical, but it can scarcely ever be used alone.”¹²⁸ Indirect presentation is the more “dramatic” method; it takes more space to develop.¹²⁹ Powell indicates that showing is less precise than telling; it demands more from the reader to ascertain the traits of a character. Readers must draw inferences from clues in the text in order to reconstruct the character. Gowler notes that indirect presentation “increase[s] in importance with duration and reiteration: a routine act usually carries more weight than a one-time action.”¹³⁰ While direct presentation may give the impression that the character is static or unchanging, indirect presentation is more conducive for showing

¹²⁶ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 62.

¹²⁷ Percy Lubbock appears to have been the first person to use the language of *telling* versus *showing* (for example, see pages 62, 66 in *The Craft of Fiction* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921]), but it is based upon Henry James’ technique of dramatizing his stories. Another one of James’ disciple, Warren Beach, captures the same idea with the words *dramatic* and *undramatic*: “The dramatic method is the method of direct presentation, and aims to give the reader the sense of being present, here and now, in the scene of an action. That is why those elements are undramatic which make us aware of an author explaining things: exposition, description, and characterization by the author, psychological analysis, philosophizing and sentimentalizing about the characters and events”; see *The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1932), 181. Robie Macauley and George Lanning use different language which amounts to the same thing: “There are two principal ways by which the writer may present his characters. He may choose to describe them either in a set piece or by ‘unrolling’ them” (*Technique*, 61). Walsh distinguishes between three techniques of characterization: “A narrator can *tell* us about a character (telling), or *show* us the character speaking or acting (direct showing), or show us *other* characters speaking or acting with reference to the character we are interested in (indirect showing)” (*Old Testament Narrative*, 34).

¹²⁸ Perrine, *Story*, 67.

¹²⁹ Elwood claims that the direct method of presentation actually takes more skill on the part of the author since the author must try to make the character “live” by describing him or her from without (*Characters*, 145).

¹³⁰ Gowler, *Host*, 61.

the dynamic aspects of character.¹³¹ Regarding biblical narrative, Shimon Bar-Efrat comments that “Whereas the importance of the direct ways of shaping the characters lies in their quality (the fact that they are clear and unequivocal), that of the indirect lies in their quantity. This means that there is more indirect than direct shaping of characters in biblical narrative and therefore the burden of characterization falls primarily on this method.”¹³²

The distinction between telling and showing can actually be traced back to Plato.¹³³ In *The Republic* 392c–394b, Plato distinguishes between *narration* (διήγησις) and *imitation* (μίμησις). In narration Homer tells a scene in his own way; in imitation he gives a more direct transmission of words and events.

In what follows we will consider sources or means for indirect characterization, that is, those dimensions of human personhood that are available for an author to construct, or a reader to reconstruct, the character of a literary figure. We will then consider other literary devices that may be employed by the author to create character.

We will first consider “external” or “environmental” sources for characterization. Under this heading the following may be included: (1) names, epithets; (2) titles; (3) age; (4) gender; (5) physical appearance; (6) habitual posture; (7) habitual expression; (8) clothing; (9) possessions; (10) surroundings or environment; (11) socio-economic status; (12) ethnicity or nationality; (13) occupation or profession; and (14) educational background.¹³⁴

Names must be used with caution when dealing with characterization, for names may indicate character, but not necessarily so. Names are important because they are normally our first introduction to a character. To give a character a name is to distinguish that character from other characters and from the rest of its environment.¹³⁵ The name becomes a

¹³¹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 89–90; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 63.

¹³² Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 64.

¹³³ Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read*, 69.

¹³⁴ I am indebted to Elwood for this listing, to which I have added additional categories; see *Characters*, 30–31. Maren Elwood's book, *Characters Make Your Story*, is a handbook for would-be writers on how to develop characters. The book is highly instructive in understanding how the theory of characterization can be put to practical use in the actual creation of characters.

¹³⁵ Thomas Docherty, *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 43.

“character tag”¹³⁶ or a peg “on which to hang descriptions”¹³⁷ or, as Chatman puts it, a “locus of qualities.”¹³⁸ As Thomas Docherty explains, “the name is a *locus* around which characterization actually takes place—traits and qualities are ascribed to a proper name, and thus a named character is made.”¹³⁹

Rimmon-Kenan lists four ways in which names can parallel character-traits: (1) visual, (2) acoustic, (4) articulatory, or (4) morphological.¹⁴⁰ Sometimes names have literary or mythological allusions.¹⁴¹ Names may be suggestive, having symbolic significance, but they will not be exhaustive of a character’s personality.¹⁴² Sometimes there is a contrast between the name and the trait of the character, creating an ironic effect.¹⁴³ Names may also be indicative of a variety of things such as gender, geographical origin, or social status.¹⁴⁴

Biblical names, however, may not necessarily reveal character. Meir Sternberg relates that the “Bible’s system of personal references differs from most of its ancient and modern equivalents, certainly from those of comparable scope, in consisting almost entirely of unique names. That is why it boasts the largest onomasticon in literary history.”¹⁴⁵ Consequently, apart from the uniqueness of biblical names, names often exhibit “opacity, arbitrariness, irreducibility to anything beyond itself, notably including the kernel of character. A name confers being, even status, without defining personality.”¹⁴⁶ Many of the names cannot be explained etymologically or are not fully transparent. Names often reveal the character of the giver, rather than the bearer of the name (for example, Leah naming her children in Gen 29:31–30:19).¹⁴⁷

Epithets, likewise, are not fully reliable indicators of character. Bar-Efrat explains that “epithets relating to biblical characters do not refer to aspects of their personalities but to their origin—nation, tribe, city or geographical region (e.g., Uriah the Hittite, Ehud the son of Gera the

¹³⁶ Elwood, *Characters*, 32.

¹³⁷ Docherty, *Reading*, 43, quoting from John R. Searle, “Proper Names,” *Mind* ns 67 (1958): 172.

¹³⁸ Chatman, *Story*, 131.

¹³⁹ Docherty, *Reading*, 74 (italics his).

¹⁴⁰ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 70.

¹⁴¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 70–71.

¹⁴² Chatman, *Story*, 131.

¹⁴³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 71.

¹⁴⁴ Bal, *Narratology*, 123.

¹⁴⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 329–30.

¹⁴⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 330.

¹⁴⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 330–31.

Benjaminite, Jesse the Bethlehemite, Barzilai the Gileadite). In other words, epithets usually serve to identify and not to characterize people. Sternberg concurs: epithets often give an initial physical, social, moral, and/or psychological portrait of a biblical figure, but they do not go far enough; the portrait is incomplete and must often be filled out by the reader from the other details in the narrative.¹⁴⁸

Boris Uspensky insightfully demonstrates that names can be used to express different points of view within a given narrative. Often a character may be given a variety of names or titles during the course of a literary work. The way that a hero is named often marks an author's attitude towards a character, and often changes in the character are signaled by changes in the manner that he or she is named.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, a character may be designated by several different names depending on the point of view of various characters in relation to that character.¹⁵⁰ A good example from the biblical text is the way that Bathsheba is named. In 2 Samuel, she is rarely called by her name. After the initial introduction (11:3), she is called "the woman" (11:5) or "the wife of Uriah" (11:26; 12:9, 10, 15). Such designations may indicate that Bathsheba was only an object for David to fulfill his lust, or to emphasize her marital status and thus underscore the heinousness of David's act. It is not until 12:24, after Bathsheba became David's wife, that she was called by her own name again.¹⁵¹

Anonymity can also indicate character. Naming can bestow identity to a character, while anonymity shows a character's loss of position.¹⁵² Anonymity may indicate a character's marginalization or insignificance, or that the name is unimportant for understanding the character.¹⁵³ Alain Billault cautions, however, that it "would be wrong to assume that the characters who bear no name are always poorly delineated whereas those who bear a name are always well drawn."¹⁵⁴ Finally, anonymity may allow for the reader to identify with the nameless character. David Beck argues that

¹⁴⁸ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 326–27.

¹⁴⁹ Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 22.

¹⁵⁰ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 26.

¹⁵¹ Berlin, *Poetics*, 27.

¹⁵² Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 129. Resseguie appeals to the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 as an example of just this principle.

¹⁵³ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 130; David R. Beck, *The Discipleship Paradigm: Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (BINS 27; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 11.

¹⁵⁴ Alain Billault, "Characterization in the Ancient Novel" in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (ed. Gareth Schmeling; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 123.

the absence of a name can enhance a reader's potential for identifying with a character in a narrative. The lack of a name removes the nomination barrier that distinguishes the character from other characters and from the reader. The inducement to identify with a character occurs when anonymity combines with other elements of characterization, including a progressive unveiling of the character which is both positive and consistent.¹⁵⁵

Both the age and gender of a character are important for characterization. Elwood explains: "People in different age-groups react differently to situations and emotional impacts. Men, generally speaking, will act in a different manner from women, and girls from boys. For this reason, it is important that the writer let the reader know as soon as possible the approximate age of his character and whether his character is a boy or girl, or man or a woman."¹⁵⁶ Age and gender also contribute to an understanding of a character's role in society, especially when considering biblical narratives. The elderly and the young, men and women would have played differing roles in society. Age and gender may contribute in other ways to characterization. For example, Abraham's advanced age gives poignancy to his faith crisis over not having an heir.

Physical appearance may also indicate something about character. Physical description may not only include facial features and bodily proportions, but habitual posture and habitual expression. Physiognomic conventions are often used in literature to indicate character. Mikeal Parsons has done a detailed study on physiognomy in the ancient world.¹⁵⁷ He defines physiognomy as the "study of the relationship between the physical and the moral."¹⁵⁸ He claims that in the ancient world a connection was often made between the physical characteristics of a person and his or her inner qualities.¹⁵⁹ He identifies three types of physiognomy: the anatomical method, the zoological method, and the ethnographical method. The *anatomical* method correlates facial features with their corresponding emotions. The *zoological* method determines character by comparing physical features with related features in animals. The *ethnographical* method characterizes people according to their ethnic or racial background, that is, it stereotypes.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm*, 1–2.

¹⁵⁶ Elwood, *Characters*, 30.

¹⁵⁷ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 11–65.

¹⁵⁸ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Parsons, *Body and Character*, 22–23.

Readers should interpret physical appearance in conjunction with other indicators of character such as speech and actions, since physical appearance is not always a reliable indicator of character by itself.¹⁶¹ Rimmon-Kenan clarifies that one should distinguish “between those external features which are grasped as beyond the character’s control, such as height, colour of eyes, length of nose . . . and those which at least partly depend on him like hair-style and clothes.”¹⁶² Sometimes the physical traits are self-explanatory and at other times their significance is explained by the narrator.¹⁶³

Physical objects may help to contribute to characterization. The type of clothing, for example, may indicate a character’s socio-economic status, or the manner of dress (e.g., neatly or slovenly) may indicate certain character traits. For example, the extensive description of Goliath’s armor and weaponry, in addition to his stature, contributes to a picture of a potentially formidable enemy for the Israelites (1 Sam 17:4–7). Other physical objects such as houses, cars, and possessions may also reveal character. In addition, physical environment or landscape may allude to character. Other dimensions such as socio-economic background, ethnicity or nationality, profession or occupation, or educational background may all contribute to the reconstruction of a literary character.¹⁶⁴ Rimmon-Kenan observes that a “character’s physical surrounding (room, house, street, town) as well as his human environment (family, social class) are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies.”¹⁶⁵ As with physical appearance, such details should be interpreted with other character-indicators in the text.

Biblical narrative is often sparse in its physical descriptions of characters.¹⁶⁶ Berlin explains that the “Bible *does* describe its characters, at least to a certain extent. . . . But what is lacking in the Bible is the kind of detailed physical or physiological description of characters that creates a visual image for the reader.”¹⁶⁷ Physical appearance, when given,

¹⁶¹ Parsons, for example, demonstrates how the author of Luke-Acts subverts physiognomic conventions in the portrayal of his characters; see *Body and Character*, 67–141.

¹⁶² Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 67.

¹⁶³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 68.

¹⁶⁴ Billault notes that in ancient novels, characters are frequently characterized by their social position. See his discussion in “Characterization,” 122–23.

¹⁶⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Billault notes similarly that in ancient novels, “[w]ith the exception of the heroes and some protagonists the physiques of other characters are seldom and briefly described” (“Characterization,” 125).

¹⁶⁷ Berlin, *Poetics*, 34 (*italics hers*).

more often serves “to identify and variegate characters than to define characters”¹⁶⁸ or to advance the plot.¹⁶⁹ Although, physical description is sparse, an abundance of other details are often given in description, such as status, profession, and ethnic or national background. Berlin explains that “the purpose of character description in the Bible is not to enable a reader to visualize the character, but to enable him to situate the character in terms of his place in society, his own particular situation, and his outstanding traits—in other words, to tell what kind of person he is.”¹⁷⁰

As noted above, character determines plot, and plot affects character. Thus, character is revealed through action, which may include walk, gestures, and facial expressions. Actions fall under the category of indirect presentation, since rarely are we told why characters perform certain deeds. The motives often remain hidden to the reader. Hence, the reader must make inferences about what certain actions reveal about a character’s personality.

Character traits may be indicated by either one-time or habitual actions. Gérard Genette describes four possible relationships between frequency of actions (or events) in discourse time and story time.¹⁷¹

1. *Singular narration* reports once an action that happens once.
2. *Repetitive narration* reports repeatedly an action that occurs once.
3. *Multiple-singular narration* reports repeatedly an action that happens repeatedly.
4. *Iterative narration* reports once an action that happens repeatedly.

The frequency with which the narrator refers to the actions of a character may give clues as to the importance of those actions for understanding the character. Rimmon-Kenan highlights an important distinction between one-time actions and habitual actions. One-time actions connote the dynamic aspects of a character, and often occur at crucial points in the plot of a narrative. Habitual actions, on the other hand, normally suggest the static or unchanging dimensions of a character. Whereas, one-time actions do not exhibit a character’s constant qualities, they

¹⁶⁸ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 327.

¹⁶⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 48, 51.

¹⁷⁰ Berlin, *Poetics*, 36.

¹⁷¹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113–16.

are nevertheless indicative of character.¹⁷² Bar-Efrat, however, wonders whether routine tasks, which are rarely mentioned in biblical stories, truly convey character:

Since only important and exceptional deeds are generally recounted, the question arises whether unusual actions, which are more or less unique occurrences by their very nature, are sufficient to indicate characteristic traits of the protagonists. Only if someone repeats the same deed or similar ones several times is it possible to learn about the disposition and, in consequence, the character, while one single action need not necessarily show anything apart from a passing impulse.¹⁷³

His solution to this query is insightful:

In real life not everything people do is characteristic of them, but this is not the case in a literary work of art, or at least in a short story. In this respect, the length of the work is of decisive importance: because there is no room in a short story to describe the various deeds and repeated actions of any one character single actions necessarily serve to define the person. The short story chooses to relate the particular action which is characteristic of the individual and can exemplify what is considered to constitute the essential nature. We remember Cain as someone who murdered his brother, and Amnon as the person who violated his sister. If the author had wanted us to see them in a different light we would have been told about other (or additional) things they did.¹⁷⁴

Longer stories have the luxury to recount numerous actions that illustrate the character of a literary figure. Another approach is that the narrator may indicate that a character repeatedly performed some action. For example, Job continually offered up sacrifices, thus illustrating his piety (Job 1:5).¹⁷⁵ In addition, Bar-Efrat mentions that sometimes gestures are described “because they have expressive value and indicate something about the inner state of the person involved.”¹⁷⁶

Rimmon-Kenan delineates three types of action that can convey character: (1) *acts of commission*—deeds performed by a character; (2) *acts of omission*—deeds that should have been performed by the character, but were not; and (3) *contemplated acts*—the unrealized plans or intentions of a character.¹⁷⁷ Bar-Efrat comments that “Both actions and inaction bear

¹⁷² Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 63.

¹⁷³ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 80.

¹⁷⁴ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 81.

¹⁷⁶ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 84.

¹⁷⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 63.

evidence of a person's character. The failure to act sometimes results from a deliberate decision to refrain from action and sometimes from weakness and passivity. It is impossible, however, to draw conclusions about someone's character simply because no report is given of actions."¹⁷⁸

Bar-Efrat also points out that much can be learned from the decisions that characters make, for they often reveal the underlying values of a character who must struggle to choose between various options.¹⁷⁹ Charles Child Walcutt declares that

quite apart from physical action, the most important actions are decisions; these are deeds on the level of highest importance, for almost all action that affects the human condition proceeds from decisions. Decisions are revealed in words, but they occur only in a life-situation that requires a choice; in fiction such a situation comes in a plotted action and requires a context of significant social values. That is, the decision has to be about something socially, morally, ethically *important* or it will not take us far into a character.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, Springer asserts that *choice* is an important dimension in character development. She says that "the bare minimum a fictional character must do in order to emerge as a character is to be seen to make a choice."¹⁸¹ These choices then may lead to "ensuing acts, whether in a plot or in some other less causal continuity . . . that confirms the meaning of the choices and acts."¹⁸² Since choice "involves reason and thought about what is good or not," it is a "highly reliable indicator of character."¹⁸³

Indirect presentation is also accomplished through speech and dialogue. Elwood says that the four main purposes for dialogue are: (1) to reveal character; (2) to further the action of the plot; (3) to convey needed information; and (4) to show the emotional state of the speaker.¹⁸⁴

Speech is one of the most important means of revealing character for it often uncovers the character's thoughts, feelings, and motives. Not only should the reader pay attention to the content of the speech, but also to the vocabulary, idiom, diction, tone of voice, and tempo (speed

¹⁷⁸ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 82–83.

¹⁷⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 81.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Child Walcutt, *Man's Changing Mask: Modes and Methods of Characterization in Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 20.

¹⁸¹ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 32.

¹⁸² Springer, *Rhetoric*, 32.

¹⁸³ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 33.

¹⁸⁴ Elwood, *Characters*, 74.

and pacing).¹⁸⁵ Macauley and Lanning opine that “each character should express his personality in what he says: in its rhythms, locutions, idiosyncrasies, brevity or long-windedness, and syntactical structure.”¹⁸⁶ A character’s speech can indicate class, age, intellect, temperament, origin, profession, and so forth.¹⁸⁷ Other factors to consider when analyzing dialogue are the setting and circumstances.¹⁸⁸ For example, a character may lie when threatened or to save face.¹⁸⁹ Public and private speeches may differ in terms of reliability.¹⁹⁰ Also, it is important to note *whom* a character is addressing. A person may speak differently to a child than to an adult.¹⁹¹ Polite style is often used when addressing a king.¹⁹² It may also be instructive to compare a character’s speech versus his or her actions; is the character consistent?¹⁹³ Macauley and Lanning highlight one difficulty with speech: “People often express in public one set of motives and in themselves cherish another, or at least that public set very much qualified. That is why speech, insofar as its aim is characterization, moves forward by means of partial concealment.”¹⁹⁴

Genette delineates three modes of character’s speech (both uttered and “inner”) which are related to what he calls narrative *distance*. As we noted above, Plato distinguishes between two narrative modes. In the first mode, the poet himself speaks and does not hint that anyone else is speaking. This is what he calls *narration* (διήγησις). In the second mode, the poet delivers a speech pretending to be someone else (i.e., quoted words). This is what he calls *imitation* (μίμησις).¹⁹⁵ Genette discerns an intermediate mode as well. The three modes of speech are described as follows:¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁵ Bar-Efrat, however, warns that biblical narratives rarely contain distinctive speech styles to distinguish one character from another (*Narrative Art*, 65).

¹⁸⁶ Robie Macauley and George Lanning, *Technique in Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 64.

¹⁸⁷ Bowen, “Notes,” 256; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 66.

¹⁸⁸ Elwood, *Characters*, 77; Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 63.

¹⁸⁹ Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 69.

¹⁹⁰ Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 69.

¹⁹¹ Elwood, *Characters*, 78.

¹⁹² Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 65.

¹⁹³ Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 71.

¹⁹⁴ Macauley and Lanning, *Technique*, 53.

¹⁹⁵ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 162.

¹⁹⁶ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 171–72. Marguerat and Bourquin offer a concise summary of the three modes of speech. However, the English translation confusingly uses *reported*, *transposed*, and *direct* speech to identify the three modes, but then later in the same paragraph equates *reported* speech to *direct* speech (*How to Read*, 69).

1. *Narratized (narrativisé)* or *narrated (raconté)*¹⁹⁷ speech: this is the most “distant” mode. The narrator or character simply recounts what the character said, without reproducing the dialogue: “Jacob told Laban of his desire to marry Rachel.”
2. *Transposed (transposé)* speech: this is the intermediate mode that uses indirect speech: “Jacob told Laban that he wanted to marry Rachel.” Genette comments that “this form never gives the reader any guarantee—or above all any feeling—of literal fidelity to the words ‘really’ uttered: the narrator’s presence is still too perceptible in the very syntax of the sentence for the speech to impose itself with the documentary autonomy of a quotation.”¹⁹⁸
3. *Reported (rapporté)* speech: this is the most “mimetic” form of speech. It usually takes the form of a direct quotation in most narratives: “Jacob told Laban, ‘I want to marry Rachel.’” Marguerat and Bourquin note that “even in this case, the presence of the narrator in the formulation of the discourse is still very strong; it would be an illusion to confuse reported speech with documentary fidelity to words pronounced historically.”¹⁹⁹

Robert Alter informs us that for the most part the biblical writers avoid using indirect speech: “The rule of thumb is that when a speech is involved in a narrative event, it is presented as direct speech.”²⁰⁰ He later notes that the “biblical preference for direct discourse is so pronounced that thought is almost invariably rendered as actual speech, that is, as quoted monologue.”²⁰¹ The use of direct speech “has the effect of bringing the speech-act into the foreground.”²⁰² The speech is dramatized giving it a greater immediacy and vividness. The Bible even has the tendency to convert inner speech into direct speech. This underscores the similarity between speech and another technique for characterization: the presentation of the “inner life” of the character.

Narrators may choose to give readers a glimpse into the inner life of a character. When this happens, the reader is able to discern more directly the thoughts, emotions, and motives of the character. Since characters

¹⁹⁷ “Recounted” speech is probably a better translation of the French.

¹⁹⁸ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 171.

¹⁹⁹ Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read*, 69.

²⁰⁰ Alter, *Narrative*, 67.

²⁰¹ Alter, *Narrative*, 67–68.

²⁰² Alter, *Narrative*, 67.

normally do not try to deceive themselves, glimpses into the inner life of a character will give the reader a truer picture of the character than other means of characterization such as actions or speech. Walcutt explains that thought, no less than action, defines character. The accumulation of repeated mannerisms of thought and ideas helps to portray character. Moreover, "character defines itself by virtue of *what* it thinks, which is what it thinks *about*."²⁰³

Scholes and Kellogg opine that the "most essential element in characterization is this inward life. The less of it we have, the more other narrative elements such as plot, commentary, description, allusion, and rhetoric must contribute to the work."²⁰⁴ They delineate some of the means for presenting the inward life of a character. The simplest way is through *direct narrative statement*.²⁰⁵ The narrator simply tells the reader what the character is experiencing inwardly. A second common technique is the use of *interior monologue*.²⁰⁶ They differentiate interior monologue from *stream of consciousness*, which they define as "any presentation in literature of the illogical, ungrammatical, mainly associative patterns of human thought."²⁰⁷ Interior monologue, on the other hand, is "a direct, immediate presentation of the unspoken thoughts of a character without any intervening narrator." Macauley and Lanning distinguish between *direct* and *indirect* interior monologue. In *direct* monologue there is little to no intervention or mediation by the narrator. The monologue is often portrayed as first-person speech. In *indirect* monologue the narrator is more prominent: the character's name is used, along with third-person personal pronouns. The monologue evinces more coherence in the character's thoughts and it may be accompanied by the narrator's commentary or description.²⁰⁸ Interior monologue also differs from *soliloquy* which is used in drama in which the thoughts must be spoken aloud for the audience to comprehend them.²⁰⁹ Scholes and Kellogg inform us that in the ancient world, thought was conceived as internal dialogue, using the same linguistic patterns as oral speech. Thus, unspoken thought was often presented in the same way that speech would be represented.

²⁰³ Walcutt, *Man's Changing Mask*, 18.

²⁰⁴ Robert Scholes, James Phelan, and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 171.

²⁰⁵ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 171.

²⁰⁶ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 177.

²⁰⁷ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 177.

²⁰⁸ Macauley and Lanning, *Technique*, 90.

²⁰⁹ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 178. Cf. Macauley and Lanning, *Technique*, 92.

It was essentially characterization through rhetoric.²¹⁰ The use of stream of consciousness to reveal the inner thoughts of a character is a more modern approach.²¹¹

With respect to biblical narrative, Berlin declares that “Even more widespread than the misconception that there is no character description in the Bible is the notion that the Bible does not convey the inner life of its characters.”²¹² Glimpses into the inner life of biblical characters, however, are highly selective and much more sparing than in modern literature.

According to Bar-Efrat, biblical statements about a character’s inner personality convey either their character traits or mental states. Character traits may be voiced directly by the narrator or one of the characters.²¹³ Any evaluation of a character voiced by God has absolute validity. Evaluations by other characters, however, may or may not be reliable.²¹⁴

This raises another important dimension of characterization: a character can be revealed by apposition with other characters. John Darr exclaims that the “fundamental matrix within which we construct a character is the web of interrelationships that develops among all of the figures in the story world.”²¹⁵ Springer, likewise, declares that characters “serve to reveal *other* characters—to make, by their own choices and acts, rhetorical judgments on the choices and acts of others.”²¹⁶ Harvey opines that “By far the most important of contexts is the web of human relationships in which any single character must be enmeshed. So much of what we are can only be defined in terms of our relations with other people; indeed, if we wish to be rigorous, we can say with the philosophers that other people must exist if only to show us what we ourselves are not.”²¹⁷

Other characters can help reveal a character in one of three ways. First, a character can be revealed by the company that a character keeps. *With whom* does a particular character choose to associate? What does it say, for example, when Jonathan befriends David, even over the objections of his father (1 Sam 18:1–4; 19:1–7; 20:1–42)?

²¹⁰ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 180–81. Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 63.

²¹¹ Macauley and Lanning colorfully compare stream of consciousness to the movie technique of montage “in which scene after scene flashes before the spectator in seemingly chaotic sequence” (*Technique*, 88).

²¹² Berlin, *Poetics*, 37. She cites Scholes and Kellogg (*Nature of Narrative*, 166) as an example of this misconception.

²¹³ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 53.

²¹⁴ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 54.

²¹⁵ Darr, *Character Building*, 41.

²¹⁶ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 191.

²¹⁷ Harvey, *Character*, 52.

Second, a character can be revealed through the actions, speech, and thoughts/feelings of other characters. We can gain insight into a character by paying attention to how other characters perceive that character. Perceptions are expressed either by outward, verbal speech, or inward thoughts or emotions. A character can also be revealed by the way in which other characters act towards or respond to that character. Hence, the actions, speech, and thoughts/emotions of a character may function in two ways: it can reveal both the character who is performing the action, speech etc. and the character who is the object of the action, speech, etc. Determining character by this means must be used with discernment. Characters, like real people, can be ignorant, deceived, biased, self-serving, or a host of other attitudes, limitations, or obstacles that prevent characters from accurately assessing the character of another individual.²¹⁸ Characters who most closely align with the point of view of the most authoritative voice (usually the narrator) of the narrative are more reliable than those who do not (see page 80). For instance, in the gospels John the Baptist's evaluation of Jesus' character is more reliable than that of the Pharisees, for John's viewpoint more closely aligns with the viewpoint of the narrator.

The third way in which a character is revealed is through *comparison* and *contrast* with other characters. Comparison and contrast, by themselves, do not characterize. Comparison may reinforce what has already been previously established by other means.²¹⁹ Contrast can heighten the effects of characterization.²²⁰ Characters can become foils for one another; one character may serve as a backdrop for another character, thus intensifying the contrast between the two. Both comparison and contrast may be *explicit* or *implicit*.²²¹ An example of explicit contrast in the Bible is found in Gen 25:19–34 where Jacob and Esau are set in relief of one another. The contrast sets the stage for the action that follows. Implicit contrast may be found in Gen 38 and 39 where we find Judah and Joseph responding in antithetical ways to sexual temptation. The portrayals of Saul and David in 1 Samuel also implicitly contrast the first two kings of Israel. An example

²¹⁸ See Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 68–69.

²¹⁹ So Rimmon-Kenan (*Narrative Fiction*, 69), who uses the phrase “reinforcement by analogy” to encapsulate a variety of comparative indicators such as analogous names, analogous landscape, and analogy between characters (69–72).

²²⁰ Elwood, *Characters*, 139.

²²¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 70.

of comparison may also be found in the gospel of Matthew which hints at the similarities between John the Baptist and Jesus.

Minor characters are particularly useful for illuminating more significant characters. Bar-Efrat explains that “minor characters play a structural role in literature, paralleling and highlighting the main ones, whether through correspondence or contrast. . . . The minor characters serve as a background against which the personalities of the main ones stand out.”²²² Stephen Smith declares that the “purpose of the minor characters . . . is not to possess traits of their own so much as to serve as foils or vehicles of action for the more significant characters.”²²³ Galef explains the importance of minor characters: “What is gained through the depiction of flat and minor character? Oddly enough, depth: a contrasting, shifting background against which major figures play out the drama of their lives.”²²⁴

Contrast is an effective means of facilitating characterization in other ways. The actions of a character may be contrasted with earlier deeds of the same character.²²⁵ For example, there is a clear contrast between the pre-conversion Paul who persecuted the early Christians, and the post-conversion Paul who became one of the church’s most zealous advocates. Contrast may also occur between a character’s motives and actions, or between a character’s emotions and actions, or even between contrasting traits within the same character.²²⁶ Such contrast may highlight a character’s inconsistency or perhaps internal struggle between two courses of action. There also may be a discrepancy between a character, its situation, and its environment.²²⁷ The character may also act in contrast to the reader’s expectation or beyond the expected norm.²²⁸

Characterization can also be facilitated through the use of various literary devices.²²⁹ *Similes* and *metaphors* are useful devices for characterization because they use the means of comparison between one object and another. Examples can be found in the Bible. Ishmael “will be a wild donkey of a man” (Gen 16:12; NASB); “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf” (Gen 49:27);

²²² Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 86.

²²³ Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 56.

²²⁴ Galef, *Supporting Cast*, 22.

²²⁵ Berlin, *Poetics*, 40.

²²⁶ Elwood, *Characters*, 142–43.

²²⁷ Bal, *Narratology*, 129.

²²⁸ Berlin, *Poetics*, 40–41.

²²⁹ Elwood lists a number of literary devices that can be used for developing characters (*Characters*, 101–14).

Herod is a “fox” (Luke 13:32); the Pharisees are a “brood of vipers” (Matt 12:34; 23:33); and Jesus’ self-designations (e.g., John 10:11, 14) can be cited as examples of characterization using metaphors and similes.

Personification can be the means of transforming inanimate objects, forces of nature, abstractions etc. into characters by attributing human characteristics to them. We have already noted examples of the personification of wisdom in Prov 8 and the personification of trees and plants in Judg 9:7–15. *Sarcasm*, which refers to the use of words for the exact opposite of what they mean, can characterize both the person speaking and the person spoken to.²³⁰ *Irony*, which is defined by David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell as “the incongruity of knowledge, value, or point of view,” can be used in a variety of ways: (1) characters think they know what they are doing, when they are actually doing something else; (2) characters may view the world one way, when in fact it is different; (3) characters may enact values different from those they propound.²³¹ *Metonymy*, which is the substitution of one word for another word closely associated with it “is especially adaptable to characterization, where a minimum of words must exert a maximum of effect on the reader,” according to Elwood.²³² Other devices such as *hyperbole*, *paradox*, *onomatopoeia*,²³³ or *repetition*²³⁴ can also be used to facilitate characterization.

The various means of characterization delineated above differ in terms of their capability of giving the reader insight into a literary figure’s true character. Mieke Bal, for instance, distinguishes between *explicit* and *implicit qualification*. *Explicit qualification* occurs when a character talks about itself and to itself. In such cases it is practicing “self-analysis.” Bal comments that “We cannot be sure that it is judging itself correctly and literature shows many such cases: unreliable, deceitful, immature, incompetent, mentally disturbed self-analysts.”²³⁵ *Explicit qualification* can also take place through the comments of another character or by the narrator. *Implicit qualification* occurs by means of a character’s actions. Bal explains that “Explicit qualifications shed more light than implicit ones, but that light need not be reliable. Implicit, indirect qualifications can be

²³⁰ Elwood, *Characters*, 109.

²³¹ Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, 74.

²³² Elwood, *Characters*, 111.

²³³ Elwood, *Characters*, 112–14.

²³⁴ See Paul L. Danove, *The Rhetoric of Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus’ Disciples in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 290; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), for the use of the “rhetoric of repetition” in characterization.

²³⁵ Bal, *Narratology*, 130.

interpreted differently by different readers . . . But implicit qualifications may also provide a means of uncovering lies and revealing secrets.”²³⁶

Robert Alter has developed a *scale of means* which ranks the different means of characterization according to their “explicitness and certainty.”²³⁷ The lowest end of the scale, a character’s actions and appearance, leaves the reader in the “realm of inference.” The next grouping, one character’s comments on another and the direct speech by a character, moves the reader from inference to the weighing of claims.²³⁸ At the next level is the report of inward speech. Here “we enter the realm of relative certainty about character: there is certainty, in any case, about the character’s conscious intentions, though we may still feel free to question the motive behind the intention.” At the top of the scale are the reliable narrator’s explicit statements about the character which give the reader the greatest degree of certainty.²³⁹

The important point to be made, then, is that the reader must evaluate the multifarious clues that the author gives in order to reconstruct the character of a literary figure. Various pieces of evidence must be weighed according to their reliability and ability to reveal a literary figure’s true character.

A reader’s reconstruction of character is a *process*. Springer argues that “character is not given to us like a gift in the hand, or like a picture on the wall, but that it does in fact accumulate.”²⁴⁰ Since character is in fact *cumulative*, Darr contends that the reader must attend to the narrative sequence of a literary work: “The goal is not to arrive at a static conception of a character . . . but rather, to follow the reader’s *successive* construction and assessment of that character while reading the text.”²⁴¹

Bal describes the process of reconstruction: “When a character appears for the first time, we do not yet know very much about it. The qualities

²³⁶ Bal, *Narratology*, 131.

²³⁷ Alter, *Narrative*, 116. See also Williams, who lists eleven techniques of characterization from the most explicit to the most covert means (*Followers of Jesus*, 61–67).

²³⁸ Yairah Amit calls this process the “balancing of arguments” (*Reading*, 76).

²³⁹ Alter, *Narrative*, 116–17.

²⁴⁰ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 179.

²⁴¹ Darr, *Character Building*, 42. Williams similarly remarks, “The narrator not only controls the extent of the data on a character, but also chooses the order in which the information is presented. In studying characters in a narrative, it is necessary to analyze the order of the presentation and the effect of that arrangement on the reader’s understanding of a character” (*Followers of Jesus*, 56). See also Richard P. Thompson, “Reading Beyond the Text, Part II: Literary Creativity and Characterization in Narrative Religious Texts of the Greco-Roman World,” *ARC* 29 (2001): 98–100.

that are implied in that first presentation are not all 'grasped' by the reader. In the course of the narrative the relevant characteristics are repeated so often—in a different form, however—that they emerge more and more clearly."²⁴² Bal lists four principles for the reconstruction of the image of a character.²⁴³ First is the *repetition* of the relevant character traits. Second is the "piling up of data": "The *accumulation* of characteristics causes odd facts to coalesce, complement each other, and then form a whole: the image of a character."²⁴⁴ Third is the character's *relations* with other characters, or the character's relation to itself with respect to an earlier phase of the narrative. Fourth, the character may undergo a *transformation* which may alter a reader's initial reconstruction of character.²⁴⁵ These four principles work together in "dialectic back-and-forth between speculation and verification."²⁴⁶

In the process of reading, readers must fill in *gaps* or *indeterminacies* in the text to generate meaning.²⁴⁷ As Beck explains, "Each character representation is necessarily incomplete, requiring reader supplementation of indeterminacies to fill gaps."²⁴⁸ William Shepherd explains that "the reader must fill [the gaps] with the necessary literary, social, cultural, psychological, historical, or other kinds of information in order to understand the text. Reading becomes a process of forming and revising expectations as readers fill in the ambiguities of the text."²⁴⁹ Darr identifies two methods of *gap-filling*. First, is the process of *anticipation* and *retrospection*: "Moving through the text, a reader begins to formulate expectations and opinions which then become the basis upon which subsequent data is processed. In turn, one reassesses previously-formed expectations and opinions in the light of new information and insights."²⁵⁰ The second is

²⁴² Bal, *Narratology*, 125.

²⁴³ Bal, *Narratology*, 125.

²⁴⁴ Bal, *Narratology*, 125 (*italics mine*).

²⁴⁵ Springer similarly states that "one rhetorical mode by which character makes itself known to us is a process of change, an action in which we accumulate our knowledge of character chiefly in the apprehension of a change—new decisions and acts of which the character was always inherently but not overtly capable" (*Rhetoric*, 181).

²⁴⁶ Bal, *Narratology*, 126.

²⁴⁷ With regard to stories in non-narrative genres, Schenck remarks, "It is possible to lose to varying degrees the overall flow and context of the story, forcing one to engage in some speculative reconstruction. Certain key elements in the story's overall structure may be lost completely. In other ways, the rhetorical force of the story is more explicit at points, especially when the author makes arguments directly from the story" (*Cosmology*, 15).

²⁴⁸ Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm*, 9.

²⁴⁹ Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 81.

²⁵⁰ Darr, *Character Building*, 30.

consistency-building: readers attempt to develop a consistent and coherent narrative world during the course of reading by taking into consideration all of the elements of the text.²⁵¹ Readers not only base their reconstructions upon the textual data, but also supplement them by inferences from other texts and from life.²⁵² Thus, the reader's reconstruction of the image of a character is truly a complex process.

We may conclude with some general considerations on characterization offered by Rimmon-Kenan:²⁵³

First, a character indicator does not always suggest one trait to the exclusion of others; it may imply the co-presence of several traits, or cause the reader to hesitate among various labels. Second, an enumeration of means of characterization used in individual texts is insufficient. It may be instructive, for example, to establish which type of characterization predominates in a given text or for a given character. This can then be related, according to the interests of the critic, to the kind of character in question, the thematic concerns(s) of the work, the genre to which it belongs, the preferences of the author, the norms of the period, and the like. Equally interesting is an examination of the interaction among the various means of characterization. The result, as well as the reading process, will be different according to whether the indicators repeat the same trait in different ways, complement each other, partially overlap, or conflict with each other . . . Such an analysis is bound to yield complexities and nuances far beyond what could be presented here.

Identification/Point of View/Narrator

Readers often identify with characters in a story. According to Marguerat and Bourquin, "the more the characters resemble real beings, i.e. the more their life coincides with that of the reader (whether real or imaginary), the more attractive these characters will be to the reader."²⁵⁴ Readers will experience *empathy* towards characters who are most like them. Powell distinguishes between two types of empathy: *realistic empathy* is directed towards characters who are similar to the reader; *idealistic empathy* is directed towards characters who represent what they would like to be.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Darr, *Character Building*, 30.

²⁵² Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 78. Darr dubs this the "extratext" (*Character Building*, 48).

²⁵³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 72.

²⁵⁴ Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read*, 65.

²⁵⁵ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 56.

The experience of *sympathy* is a less intense identification with characters who do not share the value system of the reader. *Antipathy* is when a reader experiences repulsion or disdain towards a character.²⁵⁶ Indifference towards a character may be termed *apathy*.

It is not by accident that a reader may feel attraction or repulsion towards characters. Readers are often influenced by the *evaluative point of view* of a work. The evaluative point of view corresponds to the standards of judgment, or the values, beliefs, and general worldview that are normative for a work.²⁵⁷

Most often it is the narrator who shapes the evaluative point of view of a story. For this reason, Gunn and Fewell remark that "it might be helpful sometimes to think of the narrator as a character, distinct from the other characters. The narrator is a character who tells the story while other characters enact it."²⁵⁸ The narrator is the one who controls the presentation of the story and thus the narrator's point of view predominates over all the other characters. Moreover, it is the narrator who determines how other points of view emerge.²⁵⁹

While most narrators are usually reliable, in modern fiction it is possible to have unreliable narrators. Harvey helps to draw the distinction between the two types:

Reliable narrators are the trustworthy spokesmen of the particular reality presented in the world of any novel; their view of the world, although it may not be precisely our own, is still reckoned by us to be sane, decent, candid, mature. Unreliable narrators may be of various kinds but they all have in common the fact that the reader needs to introduce a correcting factor of his own into the narrative, to check or counterbalance some particular bias or blind spot.²⁶⁰

Unreliable narrators may be ignorant, foolish, mendacious, or self-deceived.²⁶¹ In biblical narration, however, the narrators are always

²⁵⁶ Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read*, 68; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 57.

²⁵⁷ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 53; Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 101. Literary theorists distinguish between *point of view* and *focalization*: "The first corresponds to the implicit author's conception of the world by virtue of which he shapes his narrative. Focalization designates the choice of a perspective by which the action is perceived; it is in a way the channel chosen by the narrator to convey the information" (Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read*, 68).

²⁵⁸ Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative*, 53.

²⁵⁹ Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative*, 53.

²⁶⁰ Harvey, *Character*, 74–75.

²⁶¹ Harvey, *Character*, 75.

deemed to be reliable.²⁶² Hence, biblical narrators always give accurate information; they do not make mistakes, give false or misleading information, or intentionally deceive the reader.²⁶³

A narrative may also convey the point of view of characters. In this respect, the evaluative point of view refers to the “norms, values, and general worldview that govern the way a character looks at things and renders judgments upon them.”²⁶⁴ A character’s point of view may not necessarily correspond with that of the narrator. Thus, when readers listen to characters’ speech and observe characters’ actions, they look for “congruence or discrepancy.”²⁶⁵ Gunn and Fewell comment that “In effect, we are comparing and contrasting the voices of character and narrator. A character speaks, the narrator recounts action. When there is incongruity, we often find that the narrator’s report of action is a more reliable indicator of character than the character’s speech.”²⁶⁶ A character’s speech may be given authority if it corresponds to the author’s point of view. Conversely, characters who do not share the author’s point of view are considered the least reliable characters.²⁶⁷

One can also talk about the point of view of the readers. In fact, in any given story there are three basic points of view: that of the author, the characters, and the audience. In some instances when there is a distinction between the author and the narrator, a fourth perspective is added.²⁶⁸

The presence of multiple points of view gives the narrative “depth and dimension because it is being seen from different angles.”²⁶⁹ Two major effects of multiple points of view are *ambiguity* and *irony*.²⁷⁰ According to Scholes & Kellogg, “Irony is always the result of a disparity of understanding. In any situation in which one person knows or perceives more—or less—than another, irony must be either actually or potentially present.”²⁷¹

²⁶² See Sternberg, *Poetics*, 51.

²⁶³ Gunn, & Fewell, *Narrative*, 53.

²⁶⁴ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 53.

²⁶⁵ Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative*, 71.

²⁶⁶ Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative*, 71.

²⁶⁷ Gowler, *Host*, 59–60.

²⁶⁸ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 240; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 130.

²⁶⁹ Gunn & Fewell, *Narrative*, 72; cf. Berlin, *Poetics*, 51.

²⁷⁰ Berlin, *Poetics*, 51.

²⁷¹ Scholes, *Nature of Narrative*, 240.

Boris Uspensky's monograph *A Poetics of Composition* is the seminal work on point of view. He differentiates among four different planes of point of view: *ideological*,²⁷² *phraseological*,²⁷³ *spatial/temporal*,²⁷⁴ and *psychological*.²⁷⁵ Ideological evaluation can come from a single, dominating point of view which subordinates all others, or multiple, equal points of view may be present in the work.²⁷⁶ The phraseological point of view "is especially apparent in those cases where the author uses different diction to describe different characters or where he makes use of one form or another of reported or substituted speech in his description."²⁷⁷ In the spatial plane a narrator's position may or may not concur with a character in the story, or the narrator may shift among different spatial points of view.²⁷⁸ Likewise, the story may be told from varying temporal points of view.²⁷⁹ Finally, in the psychological plane the author may tell the story through one or more character's subjective viewpoint, or the author may describe events objectively as possible.²⁸⁰ A character's behavior may be described from the point of view of an outsider, or from the character's own perspective, or from an omniscient narrator who has access to the inner world of the character.²⁸¹ This point of view may be consistently external or internal or may vary throughout the narrative.²⁸² On the psychological plane, characters may be of three types: (1) characters who are always described from an external point of view, (2) those who are always described from an internal point of view, and (3) those who are described from both perspectives.²⁸³ The various points of view may concur at all levels, but frequently there is non-concurrence at two or more of these levels.

²⁷² Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 8–16.

²⁷³ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 17–56.

²⁷⁴ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 57–80.

²⁷⁵ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 81–100.

²⁷⁶ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 8–10.

²⁷⁷ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 17.

²⁷⁸ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 58–65.

²⁷⁹ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 65–68.

²⁸⁰ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 81.

²⁸¹ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 83.

²⁸² Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 87–89.

²⁸³ Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 97–98.

CHARACTERIZATION IN ANCIENT LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE

The Practice of Characterization in Ancient Literature

Having surveyed the theory and practice of modern literary characterization, it is appropriate to ask whether modern conceptions of characterization can be applied to ancient texts. Hochman raises this question and replies that “we must first acknowledge the fact that we retrieve figures from older literature in terms of our own perception of character and of our perception of motives operative within character. We do so in regard to characters in literature exactly as we do in regard to historical figures.”²⁸⁴ In order to close the gap between our time and the time of the ancient text Hochman notes that we should first be knowledgeable about the meaning of the terms that the ancient author utilized as well as the significance of gestures and actions in the story world of the text. Second, we need to acknowledge that other eras and other cultures conceive personhood differently than ours does.²⁸⁵ Yet, at the end of the day Hochman argues that “we have no alternative but to construct our images of character in terms of our own knowledge and experience.”²⁸⁶

Shepherd replies to the objection that ancient documents cannot be read through modern theories:

I must again point to the depth and breadth of work in narratology. Frye's work extends back to ancient forms, as part of his purpose is to develop a historical theory about the changes in literature over the years; one of his “modes” of literature is “myth,” which includes the Bible and ancient epics, and one of his “radicals of presentation” is spoken literature such as the Homeric poems. Scholes and Kellogg likewise account for ancient epic, ancient historical and biographical forms, ancient romance, and other forms, all within one theory of historical development. Other theorists of narrative have dealt with ancient literature. Mikail Bakhtin's influential work *The Dialogic Imagination*, for example, deals with the Greco-Roman romance at great length.²⁸⁷

Moreover, Shepherd acknowledges, “it is hard to see how we can read as other than moderns.”²⁸⁸ He notes that no one objects to the application of form or redaction criticism to biblical texts, even though these

²⁸⁴ Hochman, *Character*, 54–55.

²⁸⁵ Hochman, *Character*, 55.

²⁸⁶ Hochman, *Character*, 56.

²⁸⁷ Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 49–50.

²⁸⁸ Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 50.

methodologies employ modern points of view. Shepherd concludes that "While as moderns we cannot fully understand the cultural context that spawned ancient literature, we have gained critical acumen by virtue of the long tradition of interpretation which stands before us. So we are in some respects better readers because we are moderns and therefore have more experience."²⁸⁹

It is apparent, however, that the techniques of direct and indirect presentation were used by ancient writers, especially by ancient historians.²⁹⁰ The indirect method was perhaps more commonly employed by ancient historians. J. F. Ferguson states that most "historians had used the indirect method because it gave greater opportunity for variety of treatment, for analysis of motives, and because it was more suited for narrative."²⁹¹ P. G. Walsh explains that the advantages of the indirect method "saved [the historian from] the labour of personal assessment, and can leave the onus of judgement on the reader."²⁹² Thucydides tended towards indirect presentation; he was reticent to express his own views about leading figures.²⁹³ Instead, the employment of speeches put into the mouths of individuals or comments by others took the place of direct commentary. On the other hand, according to H. D. Westlake, "Other Greek historians commit themselves more readily than Thucydides . . . to expression of opinion about the ability and character of individuals."²⁹⁴ Herodotus, for example, "expresses his own views very freely on all manner of subjects, including the ability and character of individuals. He mentions a

²⁸⁹ Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 50.

²⁹⁰ Ivo Bruns was the first to propose the distinction between the direct and indirect characterization of persons in Greek and Roman historiography in his books *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen im fünften und vierten Jahrhundert vor Christi Geburt* and *Die Persönlichkeit in der Geschichtsschreibung der Alten: Untersuchungen zur Technik der antiken Historiographie* (repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

²⁹¹ J. F. Ferguson, "Characterization in Tacitus," *CW* (1913): 2.

²⁹² P. G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), 83.

²⁹³ Ferguson, "Tacitus," 2; H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), 5; Ortho Leslie Wilner, "The Technique of Character Portrayal in Roman Comedy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929), iii; Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 16; idem, "Marcel Mauss and the Quest for the Person in Greek Biography and Autobiography," in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (eds. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 84; F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Sather Classical Lectures 42; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 92. Nevertheless, "explicit statements of judgment or description are not absent" (Thompson, "Reading," 94–95).

²⁹⁴ Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides*, 16.

vast number of persons, of whom many appear only in a single episode, and often he attaches to their names short descriptions evaluating their qualities.”²⁹⁵ Xenophon and Polybius also utilized the direct method of presentation.²⁹⁶

The Roman historians followed the same techniques as the Greek historians. Sallust tended to use the direct method.²⁹⁷ Tacitus generally employed the indirect method, although he also used a large number of direct characterizations as well.²⁹⁸ Livy regularly used the indirect method,²⁹⁹ but used other techniques as well. According to Walsh, readers of Livy form impressions of individuals in three ways: (1) speeches and remarks made by an individual; (2) attitudes of contemporaries towards the person characterized; and (3) the effect that the person characterized has on others, that is, the mental reactions or courses adopted by others.³⁰⁰ Livy, however, often comments on the careers of important individuals upon the occasion of their deaths, or inserts brief sketches at appropriate points in the narrative.³⁰¹ He also utilized the technique of comparison and contrast between individuals, although these were rarely explicit.³⁰² Walsh notes, in particular, the importance of dialogue in ancient historiography. Its ultimate purpose was to illuminate the characters involved. Because of its inherent usefulness for delineating character, Livy at times invents fictitious dialogues.³⁰³ Similarly, speeches were a means for Livy “to ‘get inside’ the speaker, and to present, through the words attributed

²⁹⁵ Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides*, 16; cf. Wilner, “Roman Comedy” (1929), iii.

²⁹⁶ Ferguson comments that in “the Anabasis [Xenophon] adopts the rather mechanical and clumsy method of appending a life-summary to the notice of death” (“Tacitus,” 2). Walbank remarks that Polybius’ practice “is not to attempt to give a general characterization when a person first crops up in his narrative, but to make comments on character and . . . to pass moral judgements on each separate incident” (*Polybius*, 92). See also Momigliano, *Greek Biography*, 16; Thompson, “Reading,” 95.

²⁹⁷ Ferguson, “Tacitus,” 2.

²⁹⁸ Ferguson, “Tacitus,” 2. Ferguson delineates a variety of methods employed by Tacitus: (1) for many unimportant characters he gives a brief description varying from a brief phrase to a complete summary; (2) at the first mention of a character he may make a direct comment, or use comments by others, or use the character’s own speech, or a combination of his own comments and the comments of others; (3) at the time of death again Tacitus may make a direct statement, comments by others, a combination of the two, a summary of previous references, or a description of the death and funeral, and of the man’s last words; (4) at key points in the narrative he may make scattered references or a summary of the whole life; and (5) the contrast of two characters (“Tacitus,” 2–3).

²⁹⁹ Momigliano, *Greek Biography*, 16; idem, “Marcel Mauss,” 84; Walbank, *Polybius*, 92.

³⁰⁰ Walsh, *Livy*, 82–83.

³⁰¹ Walsh, *Livy*, 85.

³⁰² Walsh, *Livy*, 86.

³⁰³ Walsh, *Livy*, 208–9.

to him, a psychological portrait of his qualities.”³⁰⁴ Lucian, in his essay, *How to Write History*, says that “If a person has to be introduced to make a speech, above all let his language suit his person and his subject, and next let these also be as clear as possible.”³⁰⁵

In a programmatic statement in the opening lines of his biography on Alexander (1.2), Plutarch claims that he is not writing histories but lives (βίαι). Plutarch then highlights three kinds of evidence useful for revealing the character of his subjects: *minor events* (πράγματα), *sayings* (ῥήματα), and *jests* (παιδιὰ).³⁰⁶ A person’s character could just as easily be revealed through minor words and actions as through great speeches and deeds. Plutarch does not give room for speeches in his biographies; the sayings function in a similar way to illustrate character. A. E. Wardman explains the function of jests for Plutarch:

Plutarch’s expressed liking for jests as evidence of character is surprising to those who are acquainted with his seriousness, not to say solemnity, as a writer. In order to understand him we must take into account the opposition between what is serious (*spoudaion*) and what is play (*paidia*). Plutarch is convinced that man is revealed by what he does or says at those times when he does not seem to be engaged in serious actions, such as defending his country or persuading the assembly.³⁰⁷

Thus, an important distinction can be made between historical writing and Plutarch’s *Lives*. Whereas history deals with great events, both military and political, and with grand speeches, Plutarch was content to use minor events, sayings, and jests.³⁰⁸ While character studies tend to appear as the subject of incidental digressions in history, for Plutarch the study of character was his main objective.³⁰⁹

When turning to ancient drama, it becomes apparent that, since drama does not employ a narrator, its primary means of characterization is through indirect presentation. Nevertheless, Ortho Leslie Wilner, in her full-length study of characterization in Roman comedy, makes a distinction between *direct* and *indirect* description.³¹⁰ Direct description takes

³⁰⁴ Walsh, *Life*, 219–20.

³⁰⁵ Lucian, *How to Write History* 58; edition used: *Lucian* (trans. K. Kilburn; vol. 6; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

³⁰⁶ See A. E. Wardman, “Plutarch’s Methods in the *Lives*,” *CQ* 21 (1971): 254; *Plutarch’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 7.

³⁰⁷ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 7–8.

³⁰⁸ Wardman, “Plutarch’s Methods,” 256.

³⁰⁹ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 6.

³¹⁰ Wilner, “Roman Comedy” (1929).

place when characters name their own or one another's traits.³¹¹ Direct description may be made through monologue or dialogue.³¹² Wilner states that in the case of direct description, two points of view may be distinguished. One is the *restricted* view which resorts to the naming of traits or the explanation of one's normal moral or mental state. The *general* view tends to state "one's principles, or way of life, a report of specific acts, an application to oneself of some moral theme."³¹³ Wilner elaborates on the variety of situations in which direct description may take place (in summaries, introductions, in the presence or absence of other characters, in asides, incidental remarks etc.).³¹⁴

Wilner also demonstrates that indirect revelation of character is facilitated through action and attitude. Dramatic action not only includes physical activity but speech.³¹⁵ Given the limitations of the ancient Roman stage, action may be presented as taking place on the stage, or reported as having occurred.³¹⁶ Action may be essential for the plot or incidental. The latter may be more valuable for illuminating character since incidental actions are not required by the plot.³¹⁷ Again, Wilner elaborates on a variety of types of actions that may occur in a play that reveal character.³¹⁸ Likewise, attitudes and emotions can be used to reveal character through various means.³¹⁹

Roman comedy also employs the device of *contrast* in character portrayal. Contrast can take place through direct descriptions of character, or by contrasting reactions of the persons in the plays.³²⁰ Contrast may also be used on a single individual, since a character may change in actuality or pretense. According to Wilner, any "actual changes of character take the form of a description of the person's apparent disposition as it was before the action of the play begins, contrasted specifically or by implication with his present ways."³²¹ A character may also be contrasted with an erroneous description of the character given by another character in

³¹¹ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 9.

³¹² Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 9.

³¹³ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 12.

³¹⁴ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 9–59.

³¹⁵ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 60.

³¹⁶ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 60. Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 179–188.

³¹⁷ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 67.

³¹⁸ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 60–88.

³¹⁹ Wilner, "Roman Comedy" (1929), 89–114.

³²⁰ Ortha Leslie Wilner, "Contrast and Repetition as Devices in the Technique of Character Portrayal in Roman Comedy," *CP* 25 (1930): 57–58.

³²¹ Wilner, "Contrast and Repetition," 63.

the play.³²² Finally, an individual may exhibit contradictory traits in certain roles which bring out “different sides of a complex nature.”³²³ Another device used for character portrayal is *repetition*, whether it was a repetition of actions, details, words, motifs, and so forth.³²⁴

It is clear, then, that techniques of characterization were utilized in a variety of ancient genres. Gowler illustrates at length how direct and indirect presentation were employed in ancient Greek tragedies, biographies (e.g., Plutarch; Suetonius), histories (e.g., Tacitus; Josephus; 1 Maccabees), novels (e.g., Chariton; Apuleius), as well as in the OT.³²⁵ Stephen Halliwell distinguishes between two groups of genres which favor either direct or indirect methods of characterization:

Large areas of Greek literature—represented by much elegy and iambus, by epinician lyric, and by much history, oratory, and philosophy—depend primarily on descriptive and narrative [= direct] means of characterization. Standing in a broad, though not unequivocal, contrast to this material are those genres—principally epic, tragedy, and comedy—which make extensive use of *dramatic* [= indirect] modes.³²⁶

Naturally, both techniques of characterization are present in both sets of genres, but one tends to predominate in one group, while the other is more prevalent in the other. Halliwell underscores the differences between the two modes: “The first mode, the descriptive or narrative, tends to give us more ‘distance’, sometimes moralistic, images of individuals, set firmly in the terms of general ethical categories. The second . . . has in addition the means to bring characters close to its audiences: to put them dramatically before our eyes, to let them speak for themselves.”³²⁷

Ancient Conceptions of Personality

How then did the ancients conceive personality? According to Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey, ancient persons had a *dyadic* personality.³²⁸ That is, they did not think of themselves in terms of individuality, but

³²² Wilner, “Contrast and Repetition,” 64.

³²³ Wilner, “Contrast and Repetition,” 65.

³²⁴ Wilner, “Contrast and Repetition,” 66–71.

³²⁵ Gowler, *Host*, 77–176.

³²⁶ Stephen Halliwell, “Traditional Greek Conceptions of Character,” in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (ed. Christopher Pelling; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 58 (italics his).

³²⁷ Halliwell, “Conceptions of Character,” 58.

³²⁸ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 67; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey,

in terms of their group orientation of which they were a part. Dyadic personalities need other persons to define who they are: "Such a person perceives himself as always interrelated to other persons, while occupying a distinct social position both horizontally (with others sharing the same status, ranging from center to periphery) and vertically (with others above and below in social rank)."³²⁹ Malina explains that they "perceive themselves and form their self-image in terms of what others perceive and feed back to them. They feel the need of others for their very psychological existence, since the image they have of themselves must agree with the image formulated and presented by significant others, by members of significant and person-sustaining groups such as family, village, even city and nation."³³⁰ Persons were expected to align their behavior to the expectations of the group to which they belonged. The person who lived up to the expectations of the larger group gained honor; the person who failed to live up to the expectations of the group was shamed.

A person was not perceived in terms of the individual but of the family, village, city, and nation.³³¹ Malina and Neyrey offer a list of basic stereotypes by which first-century Mediterranean people understood themselves and others. People were known by their *family and clan* (e.g., Simon son of Jonah; James and John sons of Zebedee); *place of origin* (e.g., Jesus of Nazareth; Paul of Tarsus); *group of origin* (e.g., Jews; Samaritans; Greeks); *inherited craft-trade* (e.g., a landowner; steward; carpenter); or *parties-groups* (e.g., Pharisees; Sadducees; Stoics; Epicureans).³³² Since dyadic personalities perceived "themselves in terms of qualities specific to their ascribed status, they tend to presume that human character is fixed and unchanging."³³³ Hence, a person's behavior would be quite predictable. Human behavior was not explained in terms of "psychological, introspective, uniquely personal" motivations. Malina opines that it "would seem that the New Testament (like the Bible in general) simply lacks any uniquely personal individualistic motives or introspectively generated explanations for human behavior. Such explanations would be quite

"First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 67–96.

³²⁹ Malina and Neyrey, "Personality," 73.

³³⁰ Malina, *New Testament World*, 67–68.

³³¹ Malina, *New Testament World*, 69.

³³² Malina and Neyrey, "Personality," 74–75.

³³³ Malina and Neyrey, "Personality," 75.

beside the point for the dyadic personality. Rather, the individual was symptomatic and representative of some group."³³⁴

Neyrey's and Malina's description of ancient conceptions of personality helpfully clarify how personality was perceived differently from modern conceptions of personality. Yet it seems that they have overstated their case. Certainly, ancient persons did not view one another in such psychological and individualistic ways as modern people do, and certainly, they were more conscious of their group status than modern persons are. Yet it appears that ancient persons were not entirely oblivious to individuality.³³⁵ In the biblical text occasionally we are given glimpses into the inner world—the thoughts, feelings, and motivations—of biblical characters. Moreover, we are able to distinguish between the individual personalities of closely-related family members, say, for example, between the brothers Jacob and Esau, or between Jonathan and his father Saul. Neyrey and Malina write about *deviance* which they define as “the behavior that violates the sense of order or classification which people construct and maintain so as to make a predictable and intelligent world. Deviance thus is an infraction against socially required law and order. Deviants are people who are caught and labelled for breaking laws or causing social disorders.”³³⁶ If it was possible for someone to deviate from culturally-accepted norms, then it was possible for someone to individuate oneself from the group.

The conception that ancient personality was deemed group-oriented and static is firmly entrenched in biblical scholarship. Aune, for example, expresses the view that in “ancient biography individuals are stylized as *types*, not depicted in terms of their historical particularity or individuality. . . . In the ancient world . . . individuals were defined by the groups to which they belonged. Psychological factors were insignificant as explanations of human behavior. Human personality was thought as

³³⁴ Malina, *New Testament World*, 70–71.

³³⁵ Timothy Wiarda agrees; he contends that the “cultures of the NT world, both Jewish and Greek, were indeed less individualistic than our own. The Gospels do not explore character in the fashion of modern novels. While recognizing this, however, I think the picture of first-century society as one that had no interest in individuals is one-sided and exaggerated”; see *Interpreting Gospel Narratives: Scenes, People, and Theology* (Broadman & Holman, 2010), 156. He goes on to explain that “a fair amount of what has been written about the non-recognition of the individual in NT times has been based on a lopsided reading of anthropological studies of modern collectivist societies.” Such studies, while highlighting valuable insights, do “not seem to provide evidence that collectivist cultures lack awareness of or interest in individuals and personalities” (156).

³³⁶ Malina and Neyrey, “Personality,” 77–78.

fixed and unchanging as the kinship and social groups that were primary sources of identity.”³³⁷ David Rhoads and his co-authors also expressed the same views: “Ancient characterization in Greco-Roman literature tended to portray stylized characters who were unchanging and predictable. Characters were not developed psychologically and showed little inclination to introspection. . . . There was little individualism, and people got their identity from the social group to which they belonged. Conformity to the group was more important than individual development.”³³⁸ Yet they concede that Mark does provide “individual exceptions to the stereotypical members of a group.”³³⁹ They further add that “Mark may be influenced by the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, where the characters are less stylized and more open to change.”³⁴⁰

Indeed, it is the pioneers of the narrative study of the OT that affirm that biblical characters are atypical and dynamic. Alter queries, “How does the Bible evoke such a sense of depth and complexity in its representation of character with what would seem to be such sparse, even rudimentary means?”³⁴¹ Alter suggests that the biblical writers “actually worked out a set of new and surprisingly supple techniques for the imaginative representation of human individuality.”³⁴² Alter elaborates on the dynamic nature of biblical characters:

This underlying approach to character is perhaps most easily seen in the capacity for change exhibited by the biblical personages who are treated at any length. Cognate with the biblical understanding of individual character as something which develops in and is transformed by time—preeminently in the stories of Jacob and David—is a sense of character as a center of surprise. This unpredictable and changing nature of character is one reason why biblical personages cannot have fixed Homeric epithets (Jacob is not “wily Jacob,” Moses is not “sagacious Moses”) but only relational epithets determined by the strategic requirements of the immediate context: Michal, as the circumstances vary, is either “daughter of Saul” or “wife of David.”³⁴³

Similarly, Sternberg marvels that “Considering the range of the Bible’s portrait gallery, it is amazing how distinct and memorable its figures remain, without benefit of formal portrayal. And this is largely due to the sur-

³³⁷ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 28.

³³⁸ Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 100.

³³⁹ Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 100.

³⁴⁰ Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 100.

³⁴¹ Alter, *Narrative*, 114.

³⁴² Alter, *Narrative*, 115.

³⁴³ Alter, *Narrative*, 126–27.

plus inner life expressed in act and speech.”³⁴⁴ Sternberg notes that in biblical narrative God’s character remains constant while human beings are subject to change.³⁴⁵ Sternberg declares that the Bible undermines character-types: “In its commitments to the mystery and dignity of man created in God’s own image . . . the Bible will not allow any ready-made law of association. . . . [E]ach personality forms a unique combination of features, the parts common or recognizable enough to establish universality and the whole unusual enough to exclude typicality in favor of individuality.”³⁴⁶ Berlin states that the “Bible’s main characters, and also many secondary characters, are not static. Changes in their character are shown by changes in their reactions. Thus the later words and deeds of a character may contrast with his earlier words and deeds.”³⁴⁷

The conception of ancient personality is also highly disputed in classical scholarship. Gowler describes the standard view: “critics generally argue that characters in ancient narratives are portrayed as types and are not depicted with any individuality. This view considers all characters to be either ideal representatives or as examples of the characteristics of a group.”³⁴⁸ Mary Ann Tolbert argues that all character depictions in the ancient world were typological in nature. Individuals were representatives or exemplars of general, ethical qualities. She remarks that ancient characterization was “the practice of particularizing the universal or individualizing the general.”³⁴⁹ She claims that the thirty character studies by Theophrastus are illustrative of this method: “Each study presented the typical, recognizable actions and words of a social or moral category, but each subject was portrayed as an individual person, located in a particular setting.”³⁵⁰ William Charles Korfmacher, however, modifies this view. He contends that “each narrative *genre* is likely to set up its own interpretation of the typical old man, man of mature years, youth, old woman, matron, and young girl. This differentiation is particularly noticeable in

³⁴⁴ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 329.

³⁴⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 324.

³⁴⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 347.

³⁴⁷ Berlin, *Poetics*, 40.

³⁴⁸ Gowler, *Host*, 79. See also William Charles Korfmacher, “Three Phases of Classical Type Characterization,” *CW* (1934): 85; idem, “Character Portrayal in Early Roman Epic,” *CW* 42 (1949): 210; Burnett, “Characterization,” 6.

³⁴⁹ Mary Ann Tolbert, “How the Gospel of Mark Builds Character,” in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical and Social-Scientific Approaches* (ed. Jack Dean Kingsbury; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997), 72.

³⁵⁰ Tolbert, “Character,” 72.

the three *genres* of comedy, tragedy, and epic.”³⁵¹ In other words, “the fixed type characters of rhetorical theory were subjected to modifications in accord with the *genre* in which they appear.”³⁵²

Since ancient characters are believed to be types, scholars have also declared that ancient characters were static and unchanging. Terese Fuhrer, for example, rejects the notion that Aeneas underwent any character development during the course of the *Aeneid*.³⁵³ She declares that the idea of character development is a modern concept that is retrojected into ancient literature.³⁵⁴ Graham Anderson similarly remarks that ancient novels were deficient in character development: “The major characters tend to be lacking in everything except perfection, while their minor supporting casts have natures determined by nothing more than their status and occupation.”³⁵⁵ Henry Prescott states that “Generally speaking, the subtlety and delicacy of modern character drawing were not realized by ancient writers; nor did they interest themselves in character development.”³⁵⁶

Yet a closer look at characterization in the ancient world reveals a more complex picture. First, there appears to be an increasing interest in the individual beginning in the late fourth century B.C.E. Gowler contends that

Greek writers from the fourth century onwards show an increasing interest in inner psychology, but the process of constructing a social identity through an association with like-minded friends remained important. Biography, autobiography, and the reflections of philosophers on ego-centered networks reflect this new individuality. This individuality also mirrored increased social mobility in Greek society, as well as new opportunities outside the framework of the city-state. A person—usually a man in the male-dominated ancient Greek society—could choose one’s life and friends, and these choices became significant enough to be worth discussing.³⁵⁷

Prescott contends that the neglect of individualism in the ancient world was a reflection of social conditions. The Greek city-state, with its emphasis

³⁵¹ Korfmacher, “Three Phases,” 85.

³⁵² Korfmacher, “Three Phases,” 86.

³⁵³ Therese Fuhrer, “Aeneas: A Study in Character Development,” *GR* 36 (1989): 63–69.

³⁵⁴ Fuhrer, “Aeneas,” 69.

³⁵⁵ Graham Anderson, *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Graeco-Roman World* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1984), 62.

³⁵⁶ Henry W. Prescott, *The Development of Virgil’s Art* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1927), 463.

³⁵⁷ Gowler, *Host*, 80.

on the "complete absorption of the individual in the large corporation" was not conducive to the study of the individual person.³⁵⁸ However, with the establishment of a monarchy under Alexander the Great, "a less circumscribed form of government" allowed for the development of a greater interest in the individual.³⁵⁹ Burnett equally argues that there was a growing interest in the individual in both Greek and Roman literature.³⁶⁰ This is not to say that ancient literature developed the kind of psychological depth found in modern novels; ancient literature still retained a rather elementary and more generalized depiction of character.³⁶¹

Second, classical scholars have noted that the depiction of character in ancient literature is actually quite complex. Regarding the plays of Sophocles, Albin Lesky finds that the designation *types* is inadequate to describe the protagonists in these plays. At the same time, these characters differ significantly from those in modern drama. He states that "they lack the wealth of individual features—often represented for their own sake—of their modern counterparts." He prefers the term *personality* as best defining these figures.³⁶² H. D. F. Kitto states that in the later plays of Euripides we perceive characters as "actors who are regarded purely as individuals, not in any degree as types, or tragic and exemplary embodiments of some universal passion."³⁶³ Simon Goldhill recognizes that while Greek tragedy does not have the same concept of character as modern literature, this does "not mean that there is in Greek drama no interest in any internal life of its personae"; rather, "there is a considerable focus on the words which express such an internal existence, attitudes of mind, disposition."³⁶⁴ Alain Billault states that in ancient novels characters change: "they are not the same persons in the end as they were in the beginning of the story. The trials they have undergone, the deeds that they have done have left their mark on them and shaped their nature."³⁶⁵

³⁵⁸ Prescott, *Virgil's Art*, 464.

³⁵⁹ Prescott, *Virgil's Art*, 464.

³⁶⁰ Burnett, "Characterization," 11–12.

³⁶¹ Prescott, *Virgil's Art*, 464–66. See also Christopher Pelling, "Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography," in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (ed. Christopher Pelling; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 213–44.

³⁶² Albin Lesky, *Greek Tragedy* (trans. H. A. Frankfort; 3d ed. London: Ernest Benn, 1978), 124.

³⁶³ H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (2d ed.; London: Methuen, 1950), 258.

³⁶⁴ Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 174.

³⁶⁵ Billault, "Characterization," 127–28.

In a series of influential essays, Christopher Gill has called into question the claim that the ancients viewed character as something that was fixed and immutable during one's lifetime and that this view is the basis of the portrayal of individuals in ancient literature.³⁶⁶ Gill asserts that these "claims are rather startlingly at variance with the preoccupation of ancient philosophers with the development of character."³⁶⁷ Character formation was viewed both as a product of nature and external factors such as "upbringing, habit and habituated training, the influence of parents, teachers and society in general."³⁶⁸ The individual was not merely seen as a passive object that was influenced by factors beyond one's control, but one who could be actively involved in one's own character formation through rational reflection and decision-making.³⁶⁹

Gill proposes that the difference between ancient and modern views of personality is what he terms as *character-viewpoint* versus *personality-viewpoint*. *Character-viewpoint* evaluates a person based on moral standards. The person is regarded as a moral agent who is "responsible, under normal circumstances, for his actions, and [has] some responsibility too for his dispositions or character-traits."³⁷⁰ *Personality-viewpoint*, on the other hand, does not evaluate the person in terms of moral norms, but attempts to understand the person psychologically. This view not only is interested in the person's long-term dispositions but also in the transient phases of a person's psychological life. This view is concerned with examining forces which fall outside a person's control as a conscious, moral agent.³⁷¹ Thus, the personality-viewpoint is more attuned than the character-viewpoint to development or changes in character, but the character-viewpoint does not preclude the possibility for change.

Gill associates two types of statements and actions with the two viewpoints he outlines.³⁷² Character-viewpoint focuses on motivation and deliberate choices underlying a person's actions and assesses the quality of those actions. Events flow naturally out of the choices made and

³⁶⁶ Christopher Gill, "The Question of Character-Development: Plutarch and Tacitus," *CQ* 33 (1983): 469–87; idem, "The Question of Character and Personality in Greek Tragedy," *Poetics Today* 7 (1986): 251–73; idem, "The Character-Personality Distinction," in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (ed. Christopher Pelling; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 1–31.

³⁶⁷ Gill, "Plutarch," 469.

³⁶⁸ Gill, "Plutarch," 469.

³⁶⁹ Gill, "Plutarch," 469–70.

³⁷⁰ Gill, "Plutarch," 471; cf. "Tragedy," 253; "Distinction," 2.

³⁷¹ Gill, "Plutarch," 471; "Tragedy," 253; "Distinction," 2.

³⁷² Gill, "Tragedy," 256.

suffering comes as a consequence of those choices. Personality-viewpoint emphasizes expressions of feelings and emotional reactions more than purposive choice. Stories told from this point of view will tend to highlight the mental struggles of individuals rather than on the action. Suffering may be more important than action and may result from forces outside the control of the individual and not as a result of any choices that were made.

Another difference between the two viewpoints is the evaluative framework for assessing a person's actions.³⁷³ In the character viewpoint "we can expect to have some grounds for reliable evaluation of people's qualities, based on significant comments by authoritative figures (human or divine) or on the inferences we are invited to draw from the development of events or from the imagery of the play."³⁷⁴ For the personality-viewpoint, however, the evaluative framework may be more ambiguous, or even non-existent.

Finally, the two viewpoints may adopt differing perspectives with regard to the persons in a story. The character-viewpoint attempts to take an "objective" or "impartial" or "impersonal" point of view, that is, it does not take into account the particular perspective of the persons involved. The personality-viewpoint, by contrast, takes a more "subjective" view in that it attempts to identify with another person's point of view.³⁷⁵

In Gill's estimation, ancient biography and historiography is "written predominantly from a character-viewpoint."³⁷⁶ Plutarch, for instance, claims that he is writing his *Lives* for the purpose of helping others improve their character through the presentation of exemplars of virtue or, in some cases, vice.³⁷⁷ Gill claims that "Roman historians typically present their work as being to pass moral judgement on great men of the past, and so to provide the reader with examples of conduct to imitate or avoid."³⁷⁸ Ancient historians felt it was their job to evaluate great men according to accepted norms, rather than try to understand them as individuals or personalities.³⁷⁹ So, although ancient historians were predisposed "to present character as something relatively fixed," it is at the same time "important neither to exaggerate this predisposition" since it

³⁷³ Gill, "Tragedy," 256.

³⁷⁴ Gill, "Tragedy," 256.

³⁷⁵ Gill, "Distinction," 4.

³⁷⁶ Gill, "Plutarch," 472.

³⁷⁷ Gill, "Plutarch," 472.

³⁷⁸ Gill, "Plutarch," 473.

³⁷⁹ Gill, "Plutarch," 473.

is clear that in moral philosophy there was an inherent interest in the formation of character.³⁸⁰ This is apparent even in Plutarch's own moral essays. When turning to ancient Greek tragedy, however, Gill argues that the personality-viewpoint predominates since it invites the audience to sympathize or empathize with the main characters in the plays. Nevertheless, the character-viewpoint is not entirely absent from Greek tragedy since it also invites the audience to pass moral judgment on the characters as well.³⁸¹ While certain genres tend to favor one type of viewpoint over the other, one should not make hard and fast distinctions since both viewpoints may be found in all kinds of genres.

Third, Burnett leaves the possibility open that "ancient audiences and readers constructed much fuller characters than is usually thought."³⁸² He explains that from "modern views of characterization, which are interested in psychological description and change, indirect characterization in tragedy or ancient biography and historiography appears to be simplistic. It appears to be minimal characterization, and thus it is easy to argue from a modern point of view that characters were only types and symbols."³⁸³ Yet, it is possible that "what appears to modern critics as a minimum of characterization may have been read in maximal terms by contemporary auditors and readers."³⁸⁴

After examining ancient Hebrew and Greek literature as well as modern fiction, Bennema concludes that it is no longer tenable to claim that ancient Greek literature viewed character as something fixed or that the ancients did not have a psychological interest in personality or individuality.³⁸⁵ While ancient literature does not develop depth of character to the degree that modern literature does, it was still quite capable of producing dynamic characters. Bennema asserts that "Characterization in ancient Greco-Roman literature was more complex and varied, and capable of approaching modern notions of character at times."³⁸⁶

In light of this complexity, it seems best to adopt Gowler's open approach towards characterization in ancient literature.³⁸⁷ One should not approach a piece of literature with a predetermined set of ideas about

³⁸⁰ Gill, "Plutarch," 473.

³⁸¹ Gill, "Tragedy," 268–69.

³⁸² Burnett, "Characterization," 13.

³⁸³ Burnett, "Characterization," 13.

³⁸⁴ Burnett, "Characterization," 14–15.

³⁸⁵ Bennema, "Theory of Character," 394.

³⁸⁶ Bennema, "Theory of Character," 395.

³⁸⁷ Gowler, *Host*, 85.

characterization, but one should instead evaluate each piece of literature on its own terms. After surveying samples from a wide variety of ancient genres, Gowler concludes that "characters in ancient literature are presented in a variety of ways, as individuals or types, as simple or complex, and as developing or static. . . . characters run the gamut of complexity from a type-character . . . to an extremely complex character."³⁸⁸

Characterization in Ancient Literary Theory

There are two words in Greek that are normally translated as *character*. The first is χαρακτήρ.³⁸⁹ Χαρακτήρ is an agent noun which comes from the Greek verb χαρασσειν which originally meant the act of engraving, scratching a mark, or inflicting a wound. Later it came to mean the act of writing on wood, stone, or earth, or the stamping of an impression upon a coin blank. Eventually, the meaning χαρακτήρ was transferred from the agent to the stamp or die with which the act was carried out. The meaning of χαρακτήρ made a decisive shift from an active to a passive sense. It no longer referred to the agent or instrument, but the result, so that by the time the word first appears in Greek literature in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* the word already means an impression stamped on a coin. According to Anderson,

Neither Aeschylus nor any other Greek writer, up to and including Aristotle, employed the term with any thought of inward individuality. Herodotus applied it to a speech characteristic, Aristophanes to style as spoken expression, Euripides to abstract entities (noble descent, virtue), Plato to an individuating quality.³⁹⁰

Theophrastus used the term as the title for his character sketches, but even here he adhered to the basic meaning of the word, since he was sketching types and not individual personalities. It is not until Menander that χαρακτήρ began to be used to denote the individual nature of a single person.³⁹¹

The second word that is translated *character* is ἦθος. The term ἦθος, however, does not directly correspond to our word *character*. According to S. H. Butcher, ἦθος corresponds to the moral element in character:

³⁸⁸ Gowler, *Host*, 173.

³⁸⁹ The following discussion is taken primarily from Warren Anderson, *Theophrastus: The Character Sketches* (Kent State University Press, 1970), xv. Warren Ginsberg generally follows Anderson's discussion in *The Cast of Character: The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 14–15.

³⁹⁰ Anderson, *Theophrastus*, xv.

³⁹¹ Anderson, *Theophrastus*, xv; Ginsberg, *Cast*, 17.

"It reveals a certain state or direction of the will. It is an expression of moral purpose, of the permanent disposition and tendencies, the tone and sentiment of the individual."³⁹² The other dimension of character is διάνοια, which corresponds to the "intellectual element, which is implied in all rational conduct."³⁹³ These two dimensions of the person help determine the quality of an action.³⁹⁴

Character, ἥθος, is revealed by choice (προαίρεσις), that is, what a person chooses or avoids in circumstances where the choice is not obvious. Hence any action or speech which does not convey choice does not reveal character.³⁹⁵ If a person makes a good choice, the person will be good.³⁹⁶ Character, then, as Halliwell explains, "is the deliberate framing of ethical intentions."³⁹⁷ Hence, there are two important elements of Aristotle's definition. The first is that character "is a specific moral factor in relation to action, not a vague or pervasive notion equivalent to modern ideas of personality or individuality"; second is that character "must involve the *manifestation* of moral choice in word or action."³⁹⁸

According to Aristotle, ἥθος is one of the constituent parts of tragedy.³⁹⁹ Plot (μῦθος) is the most important element of tragedy. Character is subordinate to plot and is included for the sake of the action (πρᾶξις).⁴⁰⁰ Thompson explains that

Aristotle stressed the subordination of ἥθος to the plot because no "character" exists apart from action. One can only appeal to "character" that is observable in action. By telling about the action of the literary character, the author reveals that person's ἥθος implicitly because ἥθος not only is related to the *cause* of action but also is *developed* through action. Thus, πρᾶξις sufficiently identifies or signifies ἥθος in cases where the person's choice or προαίρεσις is exposed, even though action and not "character" is the point of significance. The ancient understanding of "character" included choice, rationality, and human responsibility, which influence the actions of all persons.⁴⁰¹

³⁹² S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics* (4th ed.; Dover, 1951), 340.

³⁹³ Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry*, 340.

³⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.7.

³⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.24; 15.2.

³⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.2.

³⁹⁷ Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 151.

³⁹⁸ Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 151–52 (italics his).

³⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.9.

⁴⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.12–18.

⁴⁰¹ Richard P. Thompson, *Keeping the Church in Its Place: The Church as Narrative Character in Acts* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 18–19.

This interrelationship of action and character explains why ancient writers often resorted to indirect presentation rather than direct description because a person's actions often reflect that person's character or ἦθος.⁴⁰²

According to Aristotle, in constructing character the poet must aim for four things in order for the characters to be convincing.⁴⁰³ First, characters should be *good* (χρηστόν). Here it means "useful, good of its kind."⁴⁰⁴ This goodness is relative to each class of people. Hence, even women and slaves could be "good" even though they are considered inferior. Second, characters should be *appropriate* or *suitable* (ἄρμόττοντα). All traits and acts must be suitable to the type of character established, for example, whether the character was male or female. Horace will expound upon this point in his *Ars Poetica*. Third, characters should be "*like*" (ὅμοιον). Aristotle does not define what he means by this term. Perrine interprets it to mean that the characters are to be plausible or life-like. They are "neither paragons of virtue nor monsters of evil nor an impossible combination of contradictory traits."⁴⁰⁵ Springer explains that the character should be "*similar* to what the dramatic situation makes likely."⁴⁰⁶ Fourth, characters should be *consistent* (ὁμαλόν) in their actions, even if they are consistent in their inconsistency. Culpepper points out that while Aristotle's list helps "provide some basis for judging whether or not the characterization in a given work is satisfactory [it offers] little assistance in the task of understanding how characters are shaped and how they function."⁴⁰⁷ This is the extent of Aristotle's discussion on character. The only other ancient literary theorist who provides any discussion on character is Horace.

Horace develops Aristotle's idea that characters should be *suitable*. The speech of a character should be appropriate to the character who speaks it—whether it be a god, a hero, an old man, a young man, and so forth.⁴⁰⁸ When constructing characters one should "[e]ither follow tradition or invent what is self-consistent."⁴⁰⁹ When dealing with familiar characters such as Achilles, Medea, Orestes, and so forth, one should present them in

⁴⁰² Thompson, *Keeping the Church*, 19.

⁴⁰³ Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.

⁴⁰⁴ Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), 22.

⁴⁰⁵ Perrine, *Story*, 67.

⁴⁰⁶ Springer, *Rhetoric*, 35.

⁴⁰⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 101.

⁴⁰⁸ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 114–118. Edition used: Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica* (trans. H. Rushton Fairclough; rev. ed.; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929).

⁴⁰⁹ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 119 (Fairclough, LCL).

ways familiar to the audience.⁴¹⁰ When constructing a new character one should “have it kept to the end even as it came forth at the first, and have it self-consistent.”⁴¹¹ Moreover, when dealing with characters one should note the manners (*mores*) appropriate to each age and “give a befitting tone to shifting natures and their years.”⁴¹² The traits conveyed must be appropriate to the years, whether one is depicting a boy, a young man, a mature man, or an old man.⁴¹³ The chorus should take a major part in the play and should always side with morality and the gods.⁴¹⁴ The gods and heroes should not be portrayed using vulgar language, nor should fauns be engaged in coarse speech.⁴¹⁵

So we see that the literary theory of characterization was not particularly developed in ancient times. However, this study will contend that the theory of characterization was well developed, not in literary theory, but in rhetorical theory. D. A. Russell declares that the practice and theory of orators and rhetoricians “are central to any attempt at understanding the Greek approach to character and characterization.”⁴¹⁶ He explains that “oratory was such an important part of Greek life that the need to provide instruction in it became the main motive force of classical, and later of humanistic, education. The conceptual framework of rhetoric thus provided the standard interpretation and critical method that was applied to all kinds of literature.”⁴¹⁷ It is to rhetoric we now turn . . .

⁴¹⁰ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 120–124.

⁴¹¹ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 125–127 (Fairclough, LCL).

⁴¹² Horace, *Ars Poetica* 153–157 (Fairclough, LCL).

⁴¹³ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 158–178.

⁴¹⁴ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 193–201.

⁴¹⁵ Horace, *Ars Poetica* 225–230, 244–247.

⁴¹⁶ D. A. Russell, “*Ēthos* in Oratory and Rhetoric,” in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (ed. Christopher Pelling; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 197.

⁴¹⁷ Russell, “*Ēthos*,” 197–98.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERIZATION IN ANCIENT RHETORICAL THEORY

TYPES OF RHETORIC¹

Ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical handbooks almost universally agree that there are three kinds of rhetoric.² The first, *judicial* rhetoric (also known as juridical, forensic, or dicanic rhetoric), belongs to the law-court. Judicial rhetoric can be divided into accusation and defense. According to Aristotle, judicial rhetoric is oriented towards the past since it is dealing with actions already committed.³ The second type, *deliberative* (or sym-bouleutic) rhetoric, takes place in the assembly and can be divided into persuasion and dissuasion. Deliberative rhetoric is oriented towards the future since it is concerned with decisions regarding what course of action to take.⁴ *Epideictic* rhetoric (also known as demonstrative or panegyric

¹ A small portion of this chapter appeared in an earlier version in my article: Brian C. Small, "The Use of Rhetorical *Topoi* in the Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews," *PRSt* 37 (2010): 53–69.

² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.3; *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1421b; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.2.2; Cicero, *De inventione* 1.5.7; 2.4.12; idem, *De oratore* 1.31.141; idem, *De partitione oratoria* 20.69–70; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.4.12–16; Theon, *Progymnasmata* 61; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 74–75; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 4, 47; Menander, Γενεθλιῶν διαίρεσις τῶν ἐπιδεικτικῶν 331. Maxey identifies various names given to each of these three classifications ("Rhetoric," 35). The following editions are used in this study: Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric* (trans. John Henry Freese; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926); *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (trans. H. Rackham; rev. ed.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957); *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (trans. Harry Caplan; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Cicero, *De inventione* (trans. H. M. Hubbell; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949); idem, *De oratore* (trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham; 2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942); idem, *De partitione oratoria* (trans. H. Rackham; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942); Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (trans. H. E. Butler; 4 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920–1922). All translations and references of the progymnasmatis (Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, Nicolaus) are based on: George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (SBLWGRW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). For the Greek text of the progymnasmatis, the following edition was consulted: Leonardi Spengel, *Rhetores graeci* (vols. 2–3; Leipzig: Teubneri, 1854). Translation of Menander is based on: *Menander Rhetor* (eds. and trans. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981); Russell and Wilson also provide a translation of Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches*, in an appendix, pages 362–381.

³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.4.

⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.4.

rhetoric) deals with topics of praise and blame.⁵ Sometimes words like laudatory, eulogistic, or encomiastic are used to designate epideictic, but these terms are best used to describe the branch of epideictic rhetoric dealing with praise. The branch of epideictic rhetoric dealing with blame is vituperation or invective. Epideictic rhetoric is oriented towards the present, for it is the present state of things that is normally in view. Aristotle, however, adds that it “is not uncommon . . . for epideictic speakers to avail themselves of other times, of the past by way of recalling it, or of the future by way of anticipating it.”⁶ Quintilian remarks that the division between the three kinds of rhetoric “is easy and neat rather than true: for all three kinds rely on the mutual assistance of the other.”⁷

THE RHETORICAL GENRE OF HEBREWS

It is appropriate at this point to consider just exactly what kind of rhetoric we are dealing with in the book of Hebrews. Hans von Soden analyzed the structure of the book along the lines of ancient judicial rhetoric,⁸ and his arrangement was followed with slight modifications by Theodor Haering⁹ and Hans Windisch.¹⁰ Scholars today generally agree that Hebrews does not fall under this category of rhetoric. Instead, scholars are divided as to whether Hebrews should be considered deliberative, epideictic, or a combination of both. Barnabas Lindars asserts that Hebrews is deliberative because its primary purpose is persuasion.¹¹ He discounts Hebrews as epideictic rhetoric because “it cannot account for the passionate anxiety of the author and the harsh warnings which frequently interrupt the theological exposition.”¹² Proponents of the view that Hebrews is deliberative rhetoric point to such features as the following: (1) focus on the future time; (2) usage of exhortation; (3) proof by examples; (4) usage of certain persuasive appeals such as the advantageous (συμφερόν; 12:10), the necessary (ἀναγκαῖος, 8:3; ἀνάγκη; 7:12, 27; 9:16, 23), the appropriate (πρέπω; 2:10; 7:26), and the possible (ἰδύνατον; 6:4, 18; 10:4; 11:6); and (5) appropriate

⁵ See Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.4.12–14 for a discussion of the various terms.

⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.4 (Freese, LCL).

⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.4.16 (Butler, LCL).

⁸ Von Soden, *Hebräerbrief*, 11. See chapter one for the rhetorical structure.

⁹ Haering, “Gedankengang,” 153–63.

¹⁰ Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 8.

¹¹ Lindars, “Rhetorical Structure,” 82–83.

¹² Lindars, “Rhetorical Structure,” 383.

subjects for deliberation such as justice, honor, expediency, security, and courage.¹³

By contrast, some scholars claim that Hebrews exhibits epideictic rhetoric.¹⁴ Harold Attridge states that Hebrews is “clearly an epideictic oration, celebrating the significance of Christ and inculcating values that his followers ought to share.”¹⁵ In comparing Hebrews to funeral orations, Thomas Olbricht contends that “Hebrews best conforms to the epideictic genre in its superstructure even though the body of the argument may be conceived as deliberative.”¹⁶ Ben Witherington is currently one of the staunchest proponents for classifying Hebrews as epideictic.¹⁷ According to Witherington, Hebrews is “not about urging a change in direction or a new policy, nor is the author correcting obvious new problems in belief or behavior.”¹⁸ Instead, he “is trying to confirm the audience in a faith and practice they already have.”¹⁹ Proponents of the view that Hebrews is epideictic rhetoric point to the following characteristics: (1) focus on the present time; (2) usage of encomiastic topics; (3) usage of amplification by means of synkrisis; (4) concern with the reinforcing of beliefs already held by the audience; and (5) lack of a *narratio* or *propositio*.

To complicate matters further, Aristotle notes the similarities between praise (ἔπαινος) and advice (συμβουλαί). What one might praise in one individual, one might advise another individual to adopt. One can easily turn praise into advice or vice versa, by a mere turn in the phraseology.²⁰

It seems, then, that we are at an impasse. The difficulty of categorizing the rhetoric of Hebrews arises from the fact that it exhibits both kinds of rhetoric.²¹ Scholars have long recognized that Hebrews alternates between

¹³ Mitchell, “Rhetorical Propriety”; Garuti, *Alle origini*, 200; Bulley, “Death,” 420n29; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 48–52; Maxey, “Rhetoric,” 125n6; Löhr, “Reflections”; Thiele, “From Son to High Priest,” 55–57, 286.

¹⁴ E.g., Aune, *Literary Environment*, 212; Black, “Rhetorical Form,” 5; Attridge, “Paraenesis,” 214; Reumann, “Enigmatic,” 168; Pfitzner, “Rhetoric,” 4; Seid, “Rhetorical Form,” 2, 133; Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 12; McCruden, “Christ’s Perfection,” 57; idem, *Solidarity Perfected*, 133; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 40–54.

¹⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 14. See also “Paraenesis in a Homily,” 214.

¹⁶ Olbricht, “Amplification,” 378. Olbricht takes a more modified stance in a later essay as he questions the usefulness of classifying Hebrews in terms of the three classical rhetorical genres (“Anticipating,” 367).

¹⁷ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 40–54.

¹⁸ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 43.

¹⁹ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 44.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.9.35–36.

²¹ George H. Guthrie correctly observes that “Hebrews is not easily categorized according to any one speech form of ancient Greek rhetoric. It not only involves elements which

exposition and exhortation. The expository sections generally correspond with epideictic rhetoric, while the hortatory sections display deliberative rhetoric. Lauri Thurén argues that Hebrews alternates between epideictic and deliberative rhetoric “which form a balanced structure.”²² By way of compromise, Koester suggests that an “assessment of the genre depends in part upon the individual hearer. For listeners who remain committed to God and Christ, Hebrews is epideictic, since it maintains the values they already hold. For those tending to drift away from the faith, Hebrews is deliberative, since it seeks to dissuade them from apostasy and move them toward a clearer faith commitment.”²³

But is the type of rhetoric only in the mind of the hearer? While Hebrews displays both deliberative and epideictic types of rhetoric, is one type subordinate to the other? According to Quintilian, “Isocrates held that praise and blame find a place in every kind of oratory.”²⁴ In other words, praise and blame were not restricted to epideictic oratory; they could be used to serve other types of speeches. Quintilian notes that praise or blame were often used in legal cases when it was appropriate to extol one’s client while disparaging one’s opponent.²⁵ The treatise *Rhetorica ad Herennium* states that while “epideictic is only seldom employed by itself independently, still in judicial and deliberative causes extensive sections are often devoted to praise or censure.”²⁶ Nicolaus the Sophist remarks that encomium could be treated as a part or as a whole: “We are treating it as a whole whenever we used it to speak well of someone, and as a part whenever in the course of deliberative speaking we praise something or other that we are urging be done, or when prosecuting we both recommend the merit of our case and attack that of the opponent.”²⁷ Nicolaus notes that Isocrates’ *Panegyricus* was a deliberative speech that had encomiastic elements, and that Demosthenes’ *On the Crown* is an example of a judicial speech that utilized praise and blame.

are in line with deliberative speeches, meant to persuade or dissuade, but also contains elements of epideictic, which consisted of public praise or blame of a given person” (*Structure*, 32).

²² Thurén, “The General NT Writings,” 590.

²³ Koester, *Hebrews*, 82; so also, deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 35.

²⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.4.11 (Butler, LCL).

²⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.2. See also Cicero, *De oratore* 2.84.349, where it is noted that topics of praise and blame are frequently employed in every type of law-suit.

²⁶ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.7.15 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁷ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 48 (Kennedy).

When examining the book of Hebrews, it becomes apparent that the epideictic rhetoric is used in the service of the deliberative rhetoric.²⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson notes that, while Hebrews evinces features of epideictic (its pervasive use of honor and shame language, the use of synkrisis or comparison, and the encomium in praise of the heroes of faith in chapter 11), it is the “clear hortatory purpose” that tips the scale towards deliberative rhetoric. Johnson elaborates: “each exposition turns to exhortation, and the entire last section of the discourse calls for a commitment from the hearers to act in certain ways rather than others. It is perhaps best to think of Hebrews as deliberative rhetoric with epideictic features.”²⁹ Andrew Lincoln agrees:

The decision one comes to on this issue depends on how one relates the two types of argument that are found in Hebrews—the more theological exposition showing the superiority of what God has accomplished in Christ, and the hortatory material with which it is interspersed. The former, in its praise of Jesus’ status and achievements, is epideictic and concerned to produce adherence to the confession about him. The latter, with its attempt to dissuade readers from falling away and to persuade them to appropriately Christian attitudes and actions, is deliberative in its orientation. However, these are not simply two separate blocks of material within the sermon. Instead, the exposition continually leads to exhortation and the exhortation is built on the preceding exposition. In this way the epideictic material is in fact in the service of the deliberative.³⁰

In a recent article, Michael Martin and Jason Whitlark, confirm these contentions by Johnson and Lincoln. They demonstrate that the epideictic rhetoric of Hebrews is consistently in the service of the deliberative rhetoric; hence, Hebrews is fundamentally deliberative in nature.³¹

When dealing with characterization in speeches, the most natural place to start is epideictic rhetoric, since it deals primarily with the praise and blame of people; nevertheless, other subjects are also legitimate topics for praise and blame. Quintilian comments that this “form of oratory is directed in the main to the praise of gods and men, but may occasionally be applied to the praise of animals or even of inanimate objects.”³² Theon describes encomium as “language revealing the greatness of virtuous

²⁸ Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 186–87; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 54.

²⁹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 13.

³⁰ Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 16.

³¹ Martin and Whitlark, “Choosing.”

³² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.6 (Butler, LCL). Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.2.

actions and other good qualities belonging to a particular person.”³³ Theon specifies that the term *encomium* referred to living persons, whereas praise of the dead was called an *epitaphios* (ἐπιτάφιος) and praise of the gods was called a *hymn* (ῥυμος), but “the method of speaking is one and the same.”³⁴ He mentions in passing that encomia could also be made of “inanimate things such as honey, health, virtue, and the like,” and that the same methods applied here as well.³⁵ The other progymnasmatists also explain that praise can be bestowed upon things such as animals, plants, places, occasions, and abstract principles (such as justice or self-control).³⁶ Despite the fact that characterization most naturally falls under the epideictic genre, we will find that characterization can also be found in the other types of speeches as well.

TECHNIQUES OF RHETORICAL CHARACTERIZATION

The Introduction of a Speech

In order to secure the goodwill of an ancient audience, it was often appropriate to mention the persons related to the case in the introduction (προοίμιον, *principium*, *exordium*) of the speech. According to Pseudo-Cicero, the introduction of epideictic speeches draws from: (1) the person (*persona*) of the speaker, (2) the person under discussion, (3) the person of the hearers, or (4) the subject matter itself.³⁷ Quintilian, when discussing the introductions to forensic speeches, classifies these sources in a slightly different way. Goodwill is secured either from the persons (*persona*) involved in the case or from the case itself. The persons involved include the speaker, the judge, the client, and the opponent.³⁸

³³ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 109 (Kennedy). Hermogenes defines encomium as “an exposition of the good qualities of a person or thing, in general or individually” (*Progymnasmata* 14 [Kennedy]). Aphthonius defines it as “language expressive of inherent excellences” (*Progymnasmata* 35 [Kennedy]). Nicolaus defines it as “speaking well of some specified person or thing in a discursive way on the basis of acknowledged merits” (*Progymnasmata* 48 [Kennedy]).

³⁴ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 109 (Kennedy). Aphthonius distinguishes encomium from a hymn, which is a celebration of the gods, and praise (ἔπαινος), which is much briefer and less artistically developed than encomium (*Progymnasmata* 35). Cf. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 14.

³⁵ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 112 (Kennedy).

³⁶ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 14–15; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 35–36.

³⁷ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.6.11.

³⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.6–15.

The person of the speaker is eminently important. Aristotle identifies that one of the three proofs (πίσταις) for speeches is the ἥθος or moral character of the speaker.³⁹ Aristotle notes that the speaker can persuade an audience by his ἥθος; he convinces the audience that he is a person worthy of their confidence.⁴⁰ An orator can win over the audience by his merits, achievement, or reputable life.⁴¹ Quintilian points out that if the speaker “is believed to be a good man, this consideration will exercise the strongest influence at every point in the case.” The speaker gives the impression that he is an “absolutely reliable witness.”⁴² The speaker must demonstrate that he is taking up the case out of a sense of duty, goodwill, patriotism, or some other weighty moral cause.⁴³ Furthermore, the speaker must give the impression that he is devoid of serious moral defects such as meanness, spitefulness, ambition, abusiveness, malignancy, arrogance, or slander.⁴⁴ A speaker’s gestures, countenance, tone of voice, language, and temperament all contribute to the audience’s perception of the speaker’s character.⁴⁵ Quintilian also explains that one’s manner of speaking and appearance should coincide with one’s station in life. A style befitting an old man is not appropriate for a young man. One style is appropriate for a soldier, while another is fitting for a philosopher.⁴⁶

In epideictic speeches, when dealing with the person being discussed, the speaker can either praise or censure the subject of his speech. Pseudo-Cicero explains that “if we speak in praise, we shall say that we fear our inability to match his deeds with words; all men ought to proclaim his virtues; his very deeds transcend the eloquence of all eulogists.”⁴⁷ Censure naturally requires expressing opinions contrary to praise. In forensic speeches the speaker may emphasize the worth of his client, relating his merits to the court. Or the speaker may commend the weakness of his client to the protection of the court. The speaker should also consider his client’s sex, age, and situation (*condicio*), for he may be able to move

³⁹ Quintilian claims that there is no direct equivalent in Latin to the Greek term ἥθος, but that it is often translated as *mores* or *morals* (*Institutio oratoria* 6.2.8).

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.4. See also his discussion at 2.1.2–4. Aristotle notes that for an orator to produce conviction, he must possess three qualities: good sense (φρόνησις), virtue (ἀρετή), and goodwill (εὐνοία) (2.1.5).

⁴¹ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.43.182.

⁴² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.7 (Butler, LCL).

⁴³ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.6.11; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.7.

⁴⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.7.9–10.

⁴⁵ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.43.182–184.

⁴⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.31–33.

⁴⁷ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.6.11 (Caplan, LCL).

the judge to pity a woman, old man, or child.⁴⁸ The speaker may also attack the character of his opponent, accusing him of such vices as envy, contempt, or hatred, and thus alienate the goodwill of the judges towards one's opponent.⁴⁹

Finally, the introduction may address the person of the audience. In epideictic rhetoric the speaker appeals to the values of the audience in order to embrace or reject the subject of his speech. In forensic speeches naturally the speaker should praise the judge in order to win his favor. Quintilian advises that the praise of the judge should be linked to the advancement of one's cause:

For instance, in pleading for a man of good birth we shall appeal to his own high rank, in speaking for the lowly we shall lay stress on his sense of justice, on his pity in pleading the cause of misfortune, and on his severity when we champion the victims of wrong, and so on.⁵⁰

The speaker should be acquainted with the character (*mores*) of the judge, for his temperament, whether he is harsh, gentle, cheerful, grave, stern, or easy-going, can be used to the advancement of one's cause.⁵¹ Quintilian also notes that a speaker should pay attention to the character of one's audience: "Their power and rank will make no small difference; we shall employ different methods according as we are speaking before the emperor, a magistrate, a senator, a private citizen, or merely a free man."⁵²

Encomiastic Topics

Characterization in speeches can be developed in a number of ways. First, speeches often employ the use of encomiastic topics by which to conceive personality. Second, speeches often utilize the technique of amplification and minimization in characterizing a person. Third, speeches frequently make use of a variety of rhetorical devices to develop characterization. We will explore each one in turn.

The ancient rhetorical handbooks compiled lists of topics (*τόποι*, *loci*), or conceptual categories, for the development of characterization. As Cicero states, "Praise and censure will be derived from the topics [*loci*]

⁴⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.13.

⁴⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.14.

⁵⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.16 (Butler, LCL).

⁵¹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.17.

⁵² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.43 (Butler, LCL).

that are employed with respect to the attributes of persons.”⁵³ These lists are valuable for helping us understand how ancient persons conceived the various dimensions of a person’s character. These lists provided a template by which ancient orators or authors could go about composing an encomium or invective of another person.

In what follows, we will first survey encomiastic topics lists in epideictic rhetoric before turning to topic lists of the person in other rhetorical genres. We will consider each work in roughly chronological order beginning from the earliest Greek handbooks, moving next to the Latin handbooks, and then finally to the postclassical handbooks of the progymnasmatists, Menander, and Pseudo-Dionysius.

The *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* was probably written by an unknown author sometime during the second half of the fourth century B.C.E.⁵⁴ It has been falsely attributed to Aristotle, while others have attributed the work to Anaximenes of Lampsacus, a tutor of Alexander.⁵⁵ Pseudo-Aristotle composed a list of topics for eulogy as follows:⁵⁶

- Goods external to virtue
 - High birth (εὐγένεια)
 - Strength (ῥώμη)
 - Beauty (κάλλος)
 - Wealth (πλοῦτος)
- Goods inherent in virtue
 - Wisdom (σοφία)
 - Justice (δικαιοσύνη)
 - Courage (ἀνδρεία)
 - Creditable habits (ἐπιτηδεύματα ἔνδοξα)⁵⁷

For Pseudo-Aristotle the goods belonging to virtue take precedence over the goods external to virtue, since persons who possess the latter deserve more congratulation rather than praise for their fortunate circumstances.⁵⁸ These topics are then discussed under the following arrangement: the speaker first addresses the person’s genealogy, then youth, early manhood,

⁵³ Cicero, *De inventione* 2.59.177 (Hubbell, LCL).

⁵⁴ George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 114.

⁵⁵ H. Rackham, introduction to *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 258–61; Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xi. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the author as pseudo-Aristotle.

⁵⁶ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1440b (Rackham, LCL).

⁵⁷ According to H. Rackham, this virtue is a synonym for “σωφροσύνη, temperance or soundness of mind.” See his note on page 405.

⁵⁸ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1440b.

and adulthood in turn.⁵⁹ Thus, he adopts a chronological arrangement for encomia. Virtues are revealed by a person's achievements (ἔργα), character (τρόπος), or habits (ἐπιτηδεύματα).⁶⁰

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the earliest extant Latin rhetorical treatise, was written by an anonymous author (although falsely attributed to Cicero) sometime in the 80s B.C.E.⁶¹ Pseudo-Cicero provides a more elaborate list of topics for praise (*laus*) and censure (*vituperatio*). Pseudo-Cicero states that the opposite of the topics used for praise will serve as the bases for censure. Pseudo-Cicero's list can be illustrated as follows:⁶²

External Circumstances—things that happen by chance or fortune, for good or ill

Descent (*genus*)
Education (*educatio*)
Wealth (*divitiae*)
Kinds of power (*potestates*)
Titles to fame (*gloriae*)
Citizenship (*civitas*)
Friendships (*amicitiae*)
and their contraries

Physical Attributes (*corpus*)—merits or defects bestowed upon the body by nature

Agility (*velocitas*)
Strength (*vires*)
Beauty (*dignitas, forma*)⁶³
Health (*valetudo*)
and their contraries

Qualities of Character (*animus*)—rest upon judgment and thought

Wisdom (*prudentia*)
Justice (*iustitia*)
Courage (*fortitudo*)
Temperance (*modestia*)
and their contraries

As can be easily seen, Pseudo-Cicero's list is more expansive; his categories of "external circumstances" and "physical attributes" correspond to Pseudo-Aristotle's "goods external to virtue," while "qualities of character"

⁵⁹ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1440b–1441b.

⁶⁰ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1441a.

⁶¹ Harry Caplan, introduction to *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, vii–viii. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the author as pseudo-Cicero.

⁶² *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.6.10 (Caplan, LCL).

⁶³ Later Caplan (181) translates *dignitas* as "impressiveness" and *forma* as "beauty" at 3.7.14.

corresponds to “goods inherent in virtue.” Pseudo-Cicero also delineates the order of the treatment of these topics. First, the speaker should deal with the external circumstances of descent and education. When discussing descent, one should mention a person’s ancestors (*maiores*), and whether that person has brought honor or shame to the ancestors. Praise of education includes the quality of the person’s training in worthy subjects. Second, the speaker should discuss the physical advantages of the person and whether these advantages worked to the person’s credit or shame. Finally, the speaker should return to the remainder of the external circumstances as listed above. One should consider the virtues and defects of character in relation to each one of these topics.⁶⁴ Finally, Pseudo-Cicero admonishes that one does not need to use all the topics for each category of praise or censure, since some will be more applicable than others; therefore, one should select “those categories which seem to provide the greatest force.”⁶⁵

Cicero’s *De oratore*, completed in the winter of 55 B.C.E., is not a systematic treatment of rhetoric in the manner of many of the rhetorical handbooks we are dealing with. Cicero’s treatise deals with the subject of oratory in the form of a dialogue among accomplished orators. One of the interlocutors is Antonius, whose description of the topics of epideictic can be outlined as follows:⁶⁶

- Favors of fortune—physical or external advantages
 - Race (*genus*)
 - Wealth (*pecunia*)
 - Connections (*propinqui*)
 - Friendships (*amici*)
 - Power (*opes*)
 - Good health (*valetudo*)
 - Beauty (*forma*)
 - Vigor (*vires*)
 - Talent (*ingenia*), etc.
- Conduct, active or passive, manifesting moral excellence
 - Wisdom (*sapienter*)
 - Generosity (*liberaliter*)
 - Valor (*fortiter*)
 - Righteousness (*iuste*)
 - Greatness of soul (*magnifice*)

⁶⁴ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.7.13–14.

⁶⁵ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.7.15 (Caplan, LCL).

⁶⁶ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.11.46 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL).

Sense of duty (*pie*)
 Gratitude (*grate*)
 Kindliness (*humaniter*), etc.

When dealing with the favors of fortune, Antonius comments that the speaker should make note of how “the person commended made a right use of these benefits if he possessed them, managed sensibly without them, if they were denied to him, and bore the loss with resignation, if they were taken away from him.”⁶⁷

Later in the dialogue, Antonius elaborates on these sources for epideictic speeches. Qualities that are desirable in a person are not always those to be praised. He first lists a number of external or personal gifts of fortune:⁶⁸

Family (*genus*)
 Good looks (*forma*)
 Bodily strength (*vires*)
 Resources (*opes*)
 Riches (*divitiae*), etc.

These gifts by themselves, while desirable, are not praiseworthy. It is the wise use and management of these gifts that evince virtue and are worthy of praise. On the other hand, virtue, in itself, is praiseworthy and has many parts. Some virtues, such as beneficence, mercy, justice, kindness, fidelity, and courage are fitting topics of panegyrics because such virtues benefit all people. Other virtues, such as wisdom, magnanimity, strength, originality of intellect, and eloquence are admirable, but “give less pleasure” because they bestow greater honor on the individual. Nevertheless, they are still acceptable topics for a panegyric.⁶⁹

A second dialogue, *De partitione oratoria*, was written by Cicero towards the end of 46 B.C.E. or shortly thereafter, in order to instruct his son Marcus Tullius on the art of oratory.⁷⁰ In this dialogue the senior Cicero divides the topics of praise and blame into three classifications: external goods (*externus*), goods of the body (*corpus*), and goods of the mind (*animus*).⁷¹ In the discussion that follows, Cicero does not treat the topics exhaustively. The first two topics, family (*genus*), and fortune and

⁶⁷ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.11.46 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL).

⁶⁸ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.84.342 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL).

⁶⁹ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.84.343–344.

⁷⁰ Rackham, introduction to *De partitione oratoria*, 306.

⁷¹ These three goods are also mentioned in Cicero, *De oratore* 3.29.115.

estate (*fortuna et facultates*) belong under the heading of external goods, while handsome appearance (*forma*) is an example of the goods of the body. Cicero proceeds to discuss achievements (*facta*) as manifestations of the goods of the mind.⁷²

Cicero states that there are three approaches to dealing with a person's achievements. The first is to treat them in chronological order. The second approach is to begin with the most recent deeds first. The third approach topically arranges a person's achievements according to the virtues they exemplify. Virtue is revealed either by knowledge (*scientia*) or conduct (*actio*). Virtues such as prudence (*prudentia*), intelligence (*calliditas*), and wisdom (*sapientia*) demonstrate knowledge. Virtues revealed through conduct include temperance (*temperantia*), fortitude (*fortitudo*), patience (*patientia*), liberality (*liberalitas*) in the use of money, loftiness of mind (*altitudo animi*), justice (*iustitia*), religion (*religio*), piety (*pietas*), goodness (*bonitas*), fidelity (*fides*), mercy (*lenitas*), and friendliness (*amicitia*). Virtues of wisdom include ability in debating and oratory or eloquence, and modesty.⁷³ Also contributing to virtue is the study of the sciences and other disciplines such as literature, rhythms and music, mensuration, astronomy, riding, hunting, and fencing; community involvement; devotion to religion, family, and friends; and hospitality. Vices are taken from the opposite of these and other virtues (e.g., bravery, endurance, gentleness).⁷⁴

Cicero concludes by noting that attention must also be given to the following aspects of a person's character:⁷⁵

- Breeding and upbringing (*generatus*)
- Education (*educatus*)
- Character (*moratus*)
- Important or startling occurrences one has encountered
- Opinions (*senserit*)
- Utterances (*dixerit*)
- Actions (*gesserit*)
- Death (*mors*)—the nature of their death and the events that follow

Each of these topics can be arranged under the virtues mentioned above. As can be seen, in both works Cicero provides categories that correspond similarly to those listed in the handbooks discussed previously.

⁷² Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 22.74–75.

⁷³ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 22.75–79 (Rackham, LCL).

⁷⁴ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 23.80–81.

⁷⁵ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 23.82 (Rackham, LCL).

Quintilian, the famed teacher of rhetoric, wrote his *Institutio oratoria* around 94 C.E.⁷⁶ Quintilian remarks that when one deals with the topics of praise and blame, one must distinguish between the object of one's praise and the things which precede birth or are subsequent to death. Things preceding birth include country (*patria*), parents and ancestors (*parentes maioresque*), and omens or prophecies foretelling future greatness. Praise of the individual himself includes character (*animus*), physical endowments (*corpus*), and external circumstances (or accidental advantages). The latter two divisions are less important than the first.⁷⁷ Thus, Quintilian's division of the topics for praise corresponds to the three major divisions in all of the rhetorical handbooks noted above. Like the previously mentioned handbooks, Quintilian puts the emphasis on the goods of the soul or mind, that is, the virtues or character of a person.

Quintilian lists beauty (*pulchritudo*) and strength (*robur*) among the physical endowments. Quintilian then proceeds to explain that "the praise awarded to external and accidental advantages is given, not to their possession, but to their honourable employment. For wealth and power and influence, since they are the surest sources of strength, are the surest tests of character [*mores*] for good or evil; they make us better or they make us worse."⁷⁸

Unlike Cicero, Quintilian only divides the treatment of the sources of praise into two methods. The first method proceeds chronologically with a person's life, beginning from childhood through to adulthood, including both words and deeds. The second method treats one's subject topically, dividing a person's deeds under the various virtues that one wants to highlight.

Sometimes there is the occasion to praise someone who has died. These occasions include the "award of divine honours, posthumous votes of thanks, or statues erected at the public expense." Quintilian explicates further:

Among such themes of panegyric I would mention monuments of genius that have stood the test of time. For some great men like Menander have received ampler justice from the verdict of posterity than from that of their own age. Children reflect glory on their parents, cities on their founders, laws on those who made them, arts on their inventors and institutions on those that first introduced them.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix.

⁷⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.10–12.

⁷⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.13–14 (Butler, LCL).

⁷⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.17–18 (Butler, LCL).

Vituperation uses the same methods as panegyric to generate opposite effects.

Turning to the progymnasmatists, we will see that they employ the same kinds of topics and topic divisions as the classical rhetorical handbooks do. The *progymnasmata* were useful not only for oratory, but also for the composing of other genres such as poetry and history.⁸⁰ While the *progymnasmata* were generally written after the first century, when the book of Hebrews was written, they derive their exercises from the classical period. Theon, who probably wrote his handbook sometime in the first century C.E.,⁸¹ declares that there are “three large classes of things from which we shall get an abundance of arguments for an encomium.”⁸² Theon’s classification of these topics can be outlined as follows:⁸³

External Goods (τὰ ἔξωθεν)

Good birth (εὐγένεια):

City (πόλις) and tribe (ἔθνος) and constitution (πολιτεία)

Ancestors (γονεῖς) and relatives (ἄλλοι οἰκεῖοι)

Education (παιδεία)

Friendship (φιλία)

Reputation (δόξα)

Official position (ἀρχή)

Wealth (πλοῦτος)

Good children (εὐτεκνία)

Good death (εὐθανασία)

Goods of the Body (σώμα)

Health (ὑγεία)

Strength (ἰσχύς)

Beauty (κάλλος)

Acuteness of sense (εὐαίσθησις)

Ethical Virtues—Goods of the mind (ψυχή) and character (ἦθος) and the actions (πράξεις) resulting from these. For example, a person is prudent (φρόνιμος), temperate (σώφρων), courageous (ἀνδρείος), just (δίκαιος), pious (δσιος), generous (ἐλευθέριος), magnanimous (μεγαλόφρων), etc.

Theon contends that “fine actions are those praised after death... and conversely, actions praised when we are alive and yet overcoming the envy of many.”⁸⁴ Fine actions are those done for others, or for the honorable, or

⁸⁰ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 70.

⁸¹ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* xii.

⁸² Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110 (Kennedy).

⁸³ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110 (Kennedy). Butts’ wording differs slightly from Kennedy. See James R. Butts, “The ‘Progymnasmata’ of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1987), 469.

⁸⁴ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110 (Kennedy).

for the common good, or for benefactors. Actions are also praised on the basis of the occasion, whether one acted alone, or first, or when no one else acted, or did more than others, or with little help, or contrary to expectation, or done with toils, or because they were done easily or quickly, and so forth.⁸⁵ Lastly, Theon adds that “It is pleasant sometimes to draw a topic of praise from names [ὀνόματα] and homonymns [ὁμωνυμῖαι] and nicknames [ἐπωνυμῖαι], as long as this is not too vulgar and laughable.”⁸⁶

Theon says that good birth and the other external and bodily goods should be dealt with first in an encomium. The speaker should demonstrate how the person used these advantages prudently and not mindlessly, for “goods that result from chance rather than moral choice are the least source of praise.”⁸⁷ If a person lacked these advantages, the speaker should show how the person managed well without them. Next the speaker should deal with actions and successes, not in chronological order, but arranging them under the heading of the various virtues.

The name of Hermogenes of Tarsus, a famous rhetorician in the second century C.E., became attached to the second of the *progymnasmata* that we will consider.⁸⁸ His encomiastic topics can be delineated as follows:⁸⁹

- National origin (ἔθνος)
- City (πόλις)
- Family (γένος)
- Marvelous occurrences (θαύματα) at birth—e.g., dreams, signs
- Nurture (τροφή)
- Upbringing (ἀγωγή)—training and education
- Body (σῶμα)—e.g., beautiful, large, swift, strong
- Mind (ψυχή)—e.g., just, temperate, wise, brave
- Pursuits (ἐπιτηδεύματα)—e.g., philosopher, orator, general
- Deeds (πράξεις)
- Externals (τὰ ἑκτός)—relatives, friends, possessions, servants, luck, etc.
- How long he lived
- Manner of death
- Events after death

At first glance, Hermogenes does not seem to differentiate between the various topics under the larger topic headings as the other handbooks do,

⁸⁵ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110.

⁸⁶ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 111 (Kennedy).

⁸⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 111 (Kennedy).

⁸⁸ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* xii. I will simply refer to the author as Hermogenes.

⁸⁹ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 15–16 (Kennedy).

but a closer inspection indeed reveals the influence of the classical distinction of the three types of goods. The topics related to origin and youth at the beginning and death at the end frame the heart of the encomium which deals with goods of the body, goods of the mind (including pursuits and deeds), and external goods.

Aphthonius wrote his handbook sometime during the fourth century C.E.⁹⁰ He divides the topics of encomium as follows:⁹¹

- Origin (γένος)
 - Nation (ἔθνος)
 - Homeland (πατρίς)
 - Ancestors (πρόγονοι)
 - Parents (πατέρες)
- Upbringing (ἀνατροφή)
 - Habits (ἐπιτηδεύματα)
 - Acquired skills (τέχνη)
 - Principles of conduct (νόμοι)
- Deeds (πράξεις)
 - Mind (ψυχή)—e.g., courage, prudence
 - Body (σῶμα)—e.g., beauty, swiftness, strength
 - Fortune (τύχη)—e.g., power, wealth, friends
- Comparison (σύγκρισις)

As we can see, Aphthonius divides the topics a little differently from the other handbooks. Under the category of deeds Aphthonius places mind, body, and fortune; these three topics would correspond to virtues or goods of the mind, goods of the body, and external goods, respectively. Origin and upbringing naturally belong to the category of external goods. Aphthonius considers deeds as the most important of the topics of encomium, thus aligning himself with the other handbooks. Invective uses the same headings and division as encomium.⁹²

Nicolaus the Sophist, who taught rhetoric in Constantinople, wrote his handbook sometime in the latter half of the fifth century C.E.⁹³ He claims that Plato in the *Phaedrus* (270b) was the first one to divide the topics of praise into the goods of the mind, the goods of the body, and external goods.⁹⁴ Kennedy, however, notes that “Plato mentions only goods of

⁹⁰ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* xii.

⁹¹ Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 36 (Kennedy).

⁹² Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 40.

⁹³ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* xii.

⁹⁴ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 50.

mind and body; external goods were a Peripatetic addition.”⁹⁵ Nicolaus delineates the classical division of the topics of praise as follows:⁹⁶

- Goods of the Mind (ψυχή)
 - Prudence (φρόνησις)
 - Justice (δικαιοσύνη)
 - Temperance (σωφροσύνη)
 - Courage (ἀνδρεία)
- Goods of the Body (σῶμα)
 - Beauty (κάλλος)
 - Strength (ἰσχύς)
 - Size (μέγεθος)
 - Speed (τάχος)
- External Goods (τὰ ἐκτός)
 - Origin (γένος)
 - Friends (φίλοι)
 - Wealth (πλοῦτος), etc.

Nicolaus, however, claims that he will not be following this arrangement. Instead he offers the following arrangement:⁹⁷

- Origin (γένος)
 - Nationality (ἔθνος)
 - Native city (πόλις)
 - Ancestors (πρόγονοι)
- Birth (γένεσις)
- Upbringing (ἀνατροφή)
- Activities in youth
- Deeds—relate them to the virtues and make comparisons

Invective is divided into the same headings but with a view towards achieving the opposite effect as praise. As Kennedy notes, Nicolaus “has most to say about external goods, only little about virtues of the mind, and nothing about bodily advantages.”⁹⁸

Menander of Laodicea, also known as Menander Rhetor, a third-century C.E. rhetorician, deals with a variety of epideictic speeches in his treatise *περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν*. For many of these types of speeches Menander enumerates the topics of praise. The *imperial oration* (βασιλικὸς λόγος) is an encomium of the emperor. Menander suggests using the following arrangement for praising the emperor:⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 156n66.

⁹⁶ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 50 (Kennedy).

⁹⁷ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 50–52 (Kennedy).

⁹⁸ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 156n67.

⁹⁹ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 369–377 (Russell and Wilson).

Prooemia

Native country (πατρίς) and city (πόλις)

Family (γένος)

Birth (γένεσις)—consider whether signs occurred at the time of his birth

Nature (φύσις)

Nurture (ἀνατροφή) and education (παιδεία)

Accomplishments (ἐπιτηδεύματα)

Actions (πράξεις)

Times of war

Times of peace

Divide actions according to the virtues:

courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom

Legislative activity

Fortune (τύχη)

Comparison (σύγκρισις)

Epilogue

These topics are found in varying degrees in the other epideictic speeches that Menander discusses. The *speech of arrival* (ἐπιβατήριος) for a governor who has come to stay in a city displays many of the same topics as the imperial oration.¹⁰⁰ In the *birthday speech* (γενεθλιακός), one should praise the family, birth, nurture, accomplishments, and actions of one's subject.¹⁰¹ In the *consolatory speech* (παραμυθητικός), which "laments the fallen and raises the misfortune to great significance," the speaker praises the origin, nature, nurture, education, accomplishments, and actions of one's subject.¹⁰² The *address* (προσφωνητικός), which is a "speech of praise to a governor spoken by an individual," is not a complete encomium; it only concerns itself with "the actual deeds performed by its subject."¹⁰³ It divides its praise under the four primary virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. In the *crown speech* (στεφανωτικός) one briefly praises the family, fortune, education, nurture, and virtues of the emperor.¹⁰⁴ These same topics also apply to the *ambassador's speech* (πρεσβευτικός).¹⁰⁵

The *funeral speech* (ἐπιτάφιος) is based on all of the encomiastic topics as follows:¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 379–381.

¹⁰¹ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 412.

¹⁰² Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 413 (Russell and Wilson).

¹⁰³ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 415 (Russell and Wilson).

¹⁰⁴ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 422.

¹⁰⁵ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 423.

¹⁰⁶ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 420 (Russell and Wilson).

Family (γένος)
 Birth (γένεσις)
 Nature (φύσις)
 Physical beauty (τὸ τοῦ σώματος κάλλος)
 Mental endowments (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς εὐφυΐαν)
 Nurture (ἀνατροφή)
 Education (παιδεία)
 Accomplishments (ἐπιτηδεύματα)
 Actions (πράξεις)
 Fortune (τύχη)
 Wealth
 Happiness of children
 Love of friends
 Honor from emperors
 Honor from cities
 Comparison (σύγκρισις)

As can be seen there is some variation in the topics that are used in the various types of epideictic speeches. Nevertheless, it is quite apparent that the same topics reappear again and again in the various types of speeches. Menander does not seem to break down the topics according to the classic threefold division.

Finally, we come to a treatise entitled *On Epideictic Speeches*, which was attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who was a Greek historian and teacher of rhetoric in the first century B.C.E., but the treatise probably dates much later to around the time of Menander.¹⁰⁷ In discussing the procedure for *birthday speeches* (γενεθλιακός), Pseudo-Dionysius remarks that one should begin with comments on the day itself and the season of the year in which it takes place. Then one can praise one's subject according to the following outline:¹⁰⁸

Place of birth
 Nationality or race (τὸ περιέχον τὸ ἔθνος)
 Circumstances within the environment (τὸ περιεχόμενον): city, metropolis
 Household: ancestors and parents (πρόγονοι καὶ πατέρες)
 Natural qualities (e.g., physique, strength, height, appearance, virtues)
 Relations with individuals and with his city; his public service
 Expertise in some branch of knowledge (e.g., medicine, rhetoric, philosophy)

¹⁰⁷ Russell, *Menander Rhetor*, 362. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the author as Pseudo-Dionysius.

¹⁰⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 267–269 (Russell and Wilson).

In the *bridal chamber speech* (ἐπιθαλαμίος) one praises the couple by addressing “their origin [γένους] and upbringing [τροφῆς], physical beauty [κάλλους σωμάτων] and age [ἡλικία], advantages of fortune [τύχης], accomplishments [ἐπιτηδευμάτων], personal eagerness for the wedding and the union, the attitude of friends, strangers, and the whole city as a community.”¹⁰⁹ *Addresses* (προσφωνηματικός) contain encomia for the governor which include the following encomiastic topics: family (γένος), nature (φύσις), upbringing (ἀνατροφή), personality (πρόσωπον), education (παιδεία), previous actions (πράξεις), offices held (ἀρχαί), and honors (τιμαί) conferred on his ancestors.¹¹⁰ Lastly, *funeral speeches* (ἐπιτάφιος) are based on the same topics as encomia such as country (πατρίς), family (γένος), nature (φύσις), upbringing (ἀγωγή; ἀνατροφή), education (παιδεία), actions (πράξεις), and accomplishments (ἐπιτηδεύματα).¹¹¹

All of the topic lists that we have considered so far have to do with epideictic rhetoric. Although the topic lists and their arrangements varied some from author to author, the general contours of encomia are quite discernible. Most of the handbooks divided the topics of praise into three categories—external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the mind—although some of the handbooks just gave a straight listing of topics. It also appears that most of the handbooks prefer to deal first with topics related to origin, birth, upbringing, and education, and, where applicable, conclude with manner of death and things after death. In the middle they treat goods of the body and goods of the mind (or virtues), which are manifested through deeds and accomplishments. These epideictic lists, however, do not exhaust all of the topic lists for the human personality in ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric. We will now consider these additional lists.

Conspicuously absent from the authors mentioned above is Aristotle, who does not provide an encomiastic topic list. However, when discussing the sources for arguments for deliberative rhetoric, Aristotle states that “Men, individually and in common, nearly all have some aim, in the attainment of which they choose or avoid certain things. This aim, briefly stated, is happiness [εὐδαιμονία] and its component parts.”¹¹² Aristotle lists the component parts of happiness as follows:¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 270–271 (Russell and Wilson).

¹¹⁰ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 274–275 (Russell and Wilson).

¹¹¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 278–279 (Russell and Wilson).

¹¹² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.1 (Freese, LCL).

¹¹³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.3–4 (Freese, LCL).

Noble birth (εὐγένεια)
 Numerous friends (πολυφιλία)
 Good friends (χρηστοφιλία)
 Wealth (πλοῦτος)
 Good children (εὐτεκνία)
 Numerous children (πολυτεκνία)
 A good old age (εὐγηρία)
 Bodily excellences (αἱ τοῦ σώματος ἀρεταί)
 Health (ὑγίεια)
 Beauty (κάλλος)
 Strength (ἰσχύς)
 Stature (μέγεθος)
 Fitness for athletic contests (δύναμις ἀγωνιστική)
 Good reputation (δόξα, εὐδοξία)
 Honor (τιμή)
 Good luck (εὐτυχία)
 Virtue (ἀρετή)

Aristotle distinguishes between internal goods of the mind and body, and external goods such as noble birth, friends, wealth, and honor. This distinction aligns well with the threefold division of encomiastic topics noted above. In fact, when discussing happiness in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle notes that good things are normally divided into three classifications: external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body—the goods of the soul being the highest of these goods.¹¹⁴ All of these component parts of happiness help to reveal the character of a person. Aristotle defines these terms as follows:¹¹⁵

Noble birth (εὐγένεια) may be “derived from either the father’s or the mother’s side, and on both sides there must be legitimacy.”¹¹⁶ Good (εὐτεκνία) and numerous (πολυτεκνία) children include having both male and female children exhibiting both bodily and moral excellences.¹¹⁷

Wealth (πλοῦτος) “consists in abundance of money, ownership of land and properties, and further of movables, cattle, and slaves, remarkable for number, size, and beauty.” Such properties should exhibit the qualities of security, liberality, and usefulness. Useful (χρήσιμα) property is productive, that is, it is a source of income. Property is liberal (ἐλευθέρια) when

¹¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8.2.

¹¹⁵ Aristotle defines the terms both in relation to the nation or state, and in relation to the individual. We will only concern ourselves with how he defines them in relation to the individual person.

¹¹⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.5 (Freese, LCL).

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.6.

it is a source of enjoyment. Property is secure (ἀσφαλῆ) when is under one's control.¹¹⁸

Good reputation (εὐδοξία) "consists in being considered a man of worth by all, or in possessing something of such a nature that all or most men, or the good, or the men of practical wisdom desire it."¹¹⁹ Honor (τιμή) is "a token of a reputation for doing good." The components of honor are "sacrifices, memorials in verse and prose, privileges, grants of land, front seats, public burial, State maintenance, and among the barbarians, prostration and giving place, and all gifts which are highly prized in each country."¹²⁰

Among the bodily excellences, health (ὑγίεια) is freedom from illness.¹²¹ Beauty (κάλλος) varies with each age:

In a young man, it consists in possessing a body capable of enduring all efforts, either of the racecourse or of bodily strength, while he himself is pleasant to look upon and a sheer delight. . . . In a man who has reached his prime, beauty consists in being naturally adapted for the toils of war, in being pleasant to look upon and at the same time awe-inspiring. In an old man, beauty consists in being naturally adapted to contend with unavoidable labours and in not causing annoyance to others, thanks to the absence of the disagreeable accompaniments of old age.¹²²

Strength (ἰσχὺς) "consists in the power of moving another as one wills" and in the ability to pull, push, lift, squeeze, or crush something when necessary.¹²³ Excellence in stature (μεγέθος) "consists in being superior to most men in height, depth, and breadth, but in such proportion as not to render the movements of the body slower as the result of excess."¹²⁴ Finally, an athletic body has stature, strength, and swiftness.¹²⁵

A good old age (εὐγηρία) "is one that comes slowly with freedom from pain."¹²⁶ Aristotle defines a friend (φίλος) as "one who exerts himself to do for the sake of another what he thinks is advantageous to him."¹²⁷ Hence, a person who has many such friends (πολυφιλία) is fortunate, and if they are virtuous, they are worthy friends (χρηστοφιλία). Lastly, good fortune

¹¹⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.7 (Freese, LCL).

¹¹⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.8 (Freese, LCL).

¹²⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.9 (Freese, LCL).

¹²¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.10.

¹²² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.11 (Freese, LCL).

¹²³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.12 (Freese, LCL).

¹²⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.13 (Freese, LCL).

¹²⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.14.

¹²⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.15 (Freese, LCL).

¹²⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.16 (Freese, LCL).

(εὐτυχία) “consists in the acquisition or possession of either all, or the most, or the most important of those goods of which fortune is the cause.”¹²⁸

Further on, Aristotle treats the subject of virtue and vice “since they constitute the aim of one who praises and of one who blames.” The topics of virtue are the means of revealing character (ῥῆθος) which is one method of proof in rhetoric.¹²⁹ Aristotle lists the following components of virtue: justice (δικαιοσύνη), courage (ἀνδρία), self-control (σωφροσύνη), magnificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια), magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία), liberality (ἐλευθεριότης), gentleness (πραότης), practical (φρόνησις) and speculative (σοφία) wisdom.¹³⁰ The greatest of these virtues are those which most benefit others.¹³¹ Those things which produce virtue are noble (καλός), and things resulting from virtue are also noble.¹³² The effects of virtue which continue after a person’s death are more praiseworthy than those which last only during a person’s lifetime, for the former evinces greater selflessness.¹³³ Virtue is manifested in a person’s actions. Therefore, praise should focus on demonstrating that a person’s actions are virtuous. A person’s “attendant circumstances” such as noble birth (εὐγένεια) and education (παιδεία) only contribute to persuasion in an encomium. Hence, one delivers an encomium over “those who have achieved something,” since achievements are the signs of moral habit.¹³⁴

In another place, Aristotle attempts to describe the “nature of the characters [ῥῆθη] of men according to their emotions, habits, ages, and fortunes.”¹³⁵ Emotions (πάθη) include anger, desire, meekness, love, hate, fear, shame, benevolence, pity, indignation, envy, and zeal.¹³⁶ Habits (ἔξεις) refer to virtues and vices, as well as their choices and practices.¹³⁷ Age (ἡλικία) is divided into three stages of life: youth, prime of life, and old age. Fortune (τύχη) includes noble birth, wealth, power, and their opposites. Aristotle characterizes young people as sensual, mercurial, ardent, passionate, hot-tempered, impulsive, ambitious for honor and victory (but not as much for money), simple-natured, confiding, hopeful, coura-

¹²⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.5.17 (Freese, LCL).

¹²⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.1.

¹³⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.5 (Freese, LCL).

¹³¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.6.

¹³² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.14.

¹³³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.18–19.

¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.33 (Freese, LCL).

¹³⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.12.1 (Freese, LCL).

¹³⁶ Aristotle discusses these in *Rhetoric* 2.2–11.

¹³⁷ Aristotle discusses these emotions in *Rhetoric* 1.9.

geous, bashful, high-minded, and so forth.¹³⁸ Old men are characterized as pessimistic, lacking energy, malicious, suspicious, little-minded, stingy, cowardly, selfish, pragmatic, shameless, loquacious, self-controlled, lacking in desire, calculating, querulous, and so forth.¹³⁹ Men in the prime of life fall in between the two extremes.¹⁴⁰ With regard to fortune: those of noble birth tend to be ambitious and snobbish; the wealthy are prone to be insolent, arrogant, luxurious, swaggerers, and ill-mannered; while the powerful are usually ambitious, manly, energetic, and dignified.¹⁴¹ Those whose fortune is contrary to these will exhibit opposite characteristics. It is clear, then, that Aristotle believed that age and fortune are contributing factors to the characterization of people.

In his discussion of narrative (διήγημα), Theon identifies six elements that comprise narration (διήγησις): person, action, place, time, manner, and cause. He identifies several properties of the person (πρόσωπον). Theon's properties are translated by George H. Kennedy and James Butts as follows:¹⁴²

Greek term	Kennedy	Butts
γένος ¹⁴³	origin	race
φύσις ¹⁴⁴	nature	gender
ἀγωγή	training	training
διάθεσις	disposition	disposition
ἡλικία	age	age
τύχη	fortune	fortune
προαίρεσις ¹⁴⁵	morality	motive
πρᾶξις	action	action
λόγος	speech	speech
θάνατος	(manner of) death	death
τὰ μετὰ θάνατον	what followed death	what is after death

¹³⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.12.3–16.

¹³⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.13.

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.14.

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.15–17.

¹⁴² Theon, *Progymnasmata* 78 (Kennedy); Butts, "Progymnasmata," 291.

¹⁴³ The term γένος can refer to "race, stock, kin, offspring, clan, house, family"; see Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon: with a Revised Supplement* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 344.

¹⁴⁴ The term φύσις can mean "origin, nature, constitution, appearance, character, sex" (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1964).

¹⁴⁵ The term προαίρεσις can connote "choosing, purpose, resolution, plan, motive, conduct, character, reputation" (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1466–67).

Cicero provides a similar list when discussing the sources for argumentation in confirmation (*confirmatio*). Confirmation “is the part of the oration which by marshalling arguments lends credit, authority, and support to our case.”¹⁴⁶ He states that all arguments are supported either by properties of persons or actions. He lists the following attributes of persons:¹⁴⁷

Name (*nomen*)
 Nature (*natura*)
 Manner of life (*victus*)
 Fortune (*fortuna*)
 Habit (*habitus*)
 Feeling (*affectio*)
 Interests (*studia*)
 Purposes (*consilia*)
 Achievements (*facta*)
 Accidents (*casus*)
 Speeches made (*orationes*)

James Butts notes the correspondence between Theon’s and Cicero’s terms.¹⁴⁸ *Nomen*, which has no direct correlation to Theon’s terms, “is that which is given to each person, whereby he is addressed by his own proper and definite appellation.”¹⁴⁹

Theon’s φύσις corresponds to Cicero’s *natura*. The *natura* of a person is either divine or mortal. Mortal is divided into human and animal, with human further subdivided by gender, race, place of birth, family, and age.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, “advantages and disadvantages” given to “mind and body by nature” may include “whether one is strong or weak, tall or short, handsome or ugly, swift or slow; whether bright or dull, retentive or forgetful, affable or unmannerly, modest, long-suffering, or the contrary.”¹⁵¹ Butts notes that Theon, unlike Cicero, considered race (γένος), age (ἡλικία), and disposition (διάθεσις) as separate attributes.¹⁵²

Butts suggests that Theon’s ἀγωγή may correspond to Cicero’s *victus*, since the latter includes “with whom he was reared, in what tradition and under whose direction, what teachers he had in the liberal arts, what instructors in the art of living, with whom he associates on terms of

¹⁴⁶ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.34 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁴⁷ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.34 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁴⁸ Butts, “Progymnasmata,” 363–65.

¹⁴⁹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.34 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁰ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35.

¹⁵¹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵² Butts, “Progymnasmata,” 364.

friendship, in what occupation, trade or profession he is engaged, how he manages his private fortune, and what is the character of his home life."¹⁵³

Theon's τύχη corresponds to Cicero's *fortuna*. *Fortuna* may include whether one is "slave or free, rich or poor, a private citizen or an official with authority, and if he is an official, whether he acquired his position justly or unjustly, whether he is successful, famous, or the opposite; what sort of children he has."¹⁵⁴ Butts notes that included under this heading is "the nature of his death," which Theon lists as a separate item.¹⁵⁵

Habitus is defined as "a stable and absolute constitution of mind or body in some particular, as, for example, the acquisition of some capacity or of an art, or again some special knowledge, or some bodily dexterity not given by nature, but won by careful training and practice."¹⁵⁶ *Affectio* "is a temporary change in mind or body due to some cause" and may include "joy, desire, fear, vexation, illness, weakness" and the like.¹⁵⁷ *Studium* is "unremitting mental activity ardently devoted to some subject and accompanied by intense pleasure, for example interest in philosophy, poetry, geometry, literature."¹⁵⁸ Theon's προαίρεσις may correspond to Cicero's *consilium* and is defined as "a deliberate plan for doing or not doing something."¹⁵⁹

Facta (which corresponds to Theon's πράξις), *casus*, and *orationes* (Theon's λόγος) are "considered under three tenses of the verb: what he did, what happened to him, what he said: or what he is doing, what is happening to him, what he is saying; or what he is going to do, what is going to happen to him, what language he is going to use."¹⁶⁰

The same sources for arguments can also be used for refutation (*reprehensio*), which Cicero defines as "that part of an oration in which arguments are used to impair, disprove, or weaken the confirmation or proof in our opponents' speech."¹⁶¹ Cicero returns to these same attributes of the person when he discusses the sources of argumentation for the prosecutor against a defendant.¹⁶² A prosecutor may raise suspicion against a

¹⁵³ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁴ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁵ Butts, "Progymnasmata," 365.

¹⁵⁶ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.36 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁷ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.36 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁸ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.36 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁵⁹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.36 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁶⁰ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.36 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁶¹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.41.78 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁶² Cicero, *De inventione* 2.8.28–31.

defendant from any one of these attributes of the person.¹⁶³ The prosecutor must connect the alleged motive for a crime with some aspect of these attributes of the person.¹⁶⁴

In *De partitione oratoria*, the senior Cicero offers a slightly different ordering of the attributes of the person for arguments for confirmation (*confirmatio*) and refutation (*reprehensio*).¹⁶⁵ His threefold division corresponds nicely to the threefold division of encomia: goods of the body, goods of the mind, and external goods respectively.¹⁶⁶

Natural (*natura*) attributes

Health (*valetudo*)

Figure (*figura*)

Strength (*vis*)

Age (*aetas*)

(Sex): male or female

Mind

Virtues (*virtus*) & vices (*vitium*)

Arts & sciences (*ars*)

Reactions to emotions: desire, fear, pleasure, annoyance

Circumstances (*fortuna*)

Birth (*genus*)

Friendships (*amicitiae*)

Children (*liberi*)

Relations (*propinqui*)

Connections (*affines*)

Resources (*opes*)

Office (*honores*)

Power (*potestates*)

Riches (*divitiae*)

Freedom (*libertas*)

and their opposites

Finally, we turn to Quintilian's discussion for the sources of arguments. He notes "that arguments may be drawn from persons [*persona*]."¹⁶⁷ Although not an exhaustive list, he delineates the "accidents of persons" as follows:¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Cicero, *De inventione* 2.8.32.

¹⁶⁴ Cicero, *De inventione* 2.8.33.

¹⁶⁵ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 10.35.

¹⁶⁶ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 10.35–36 (Rackham, LCL).

¹⁶⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 5.10.23 (Butler, LCL).

¹⁶⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 5.10.24–31 (Butler, LCL).

Birth (*genus*)
 Nationality (*natio*)
 Country (*patria*)
 Sex (*sexus*)
 Age (*aetas*)
 Education and training (*educatio et disciplina*)
 Bodily constitution (*habitus corporis*)
 Fortune (*fortuna*)
 Condition (*condicio*)
 Natural disposition (*animi natura*)
 Occupation (*studia*)
 Personal ambition (*quid adfectet quisque*)
 Past life and previous utterances (*ante acta dictaque*)
 Passion (*commotio*)
 Design (*consilia*)
 Names (*nomen*)

These lists provided by Aristotle, Theon, Cicero, and Quintilian provide additional material from which we can understand how ancient persons conceived the various aspects of personality. Other than the one list provided by Cicero in his *De partitione oratoria*, these lists are arranged according to a straight listing of the properties or attributes of the person. It seems, then, that there were two types of lists in the ancient rhetorical handbooks: those that gave a straight ordering of the properties or attributes of the person, and those that were arranged according to the three-fold classification of (1) external goods or advantages, (2) the goods of the body or physical advantages, and (3) the goods of the mind, qualities of character, or virtue.

Encomiastic topics, as we have seen, are most often used for epideictic speeches, but are also useful for judicial and deliberative speeches when dealing with persons. We have also noted that encomiastic topics can be used in various parts of a speech. Theon addresses the topics as part of the narrative (διήγησις) and this is affirmed by Nicolaus.¹⁶⁹ Cicero discusses it for the confirmation (*confirmatio*) and refutation (*reprehensio*) parts of a speech. Theon also notes that the topics of the person can be used in refutation (ἀνασκευή) and confirmation (κατασκευή).¹⁷⁰ Aphthonius says that one should mention the good reputation (εὐφημία) of the claimant in confirmation.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 78; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 13.

¹⁷⁰ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 94.

¹⁷¹ Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 30.

While many scholars have recognized that Hebrews makes use of encomium in its exhortation, it does not appear that Hebrews arranges its material according to any kind of topic list. Nevertheless, some scholars have attempted to arrange Hebrews according to such an ancient topic list. Thomas Olbricht, for instance, notes similarities between Hebrews and ancient funeral orations. He draws upon the work of Martin R. P. McGuire, who proposed the following typical structure of funeral orations (based upon the third century C.E. work of the Greek rhetorician Menander):¹⁷²

- I. Exordium
- II. Encomium
 - a. Family
 - b. Birth
 - c. Natural endowment
 - d. Upbringing
 - e. Education
 - f. Life and occupation
 - g. Achievements
 - h. Fortune
 - i. Comparison with the great and famous
- III. Final Exhortations and Prayer

Based on this pattern, Olbricht suggests the following structure for Hebrews:¹⁷³

- I. Exordium (1.1–4)
- II. Encomium (1.5–13.16)
 - a. Family and birth (1.5–3.13)
 - b. Endowments, upbringing and education (3.14–6.12)
 - c. Life, occupation, achievements, fortune (6.13–10.39)
 - d. Comparison with the great and famous
 - 1. Throughout (1.4–12.29)
 - 2. As a special section (11.1–40)
- III. Final Exhortation and Prayer (13.17–25)

Olbricht does not elaborate at length on this proposed structure. While Olbricht's basic insight holds—Hebrews evinces encomiastic elements much like funeral orations do—there are a few problems with Olbricht's

¹⁷² This outline, taken from Olbricht ("Amplification," 378), organizes the data found on page ix of McGuire's introduction, "The Early Christian Funeral Oration," in *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose* (trans. Leo P. McCauley et al.; New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953).

¹⁷³ Olbricht, "Amplification," 378.

proposal. First, Hebrews is not a funeral oration. Second, the structure of Hebrews does not follow as neatly as Olbricht seems to suggest. Third, it is unclear why Olbricht makes the divisions where he does in Hebrews.

The solution to the problem, however, may be resolved with another type of speech which Menander discusses. Menander mentions one type of speech, the “talk” (λαλιά), that “does not aim to preserve a regular order as other speeches do, but allows the subject to be disorderly.” He explains that

you can put anything you please in first or second place. The best arrangement in a ‘talk’ is to avoid proceeding always on the same track, but to display continuous disorder. One moment, you may praise the subject on the basis of origin, the next on intention, the next on recent events that have affected him; sometimes again on the basis of fortune, sometimes on a single action.¹⁷⁴

According to Menander, the advantage of the “talk” is that one can discuss any subject of one’s choosing “without observing any technical rules of order, but taking things as they occur, so long as we aim to make each point at the proper time and understand what it is expedient to put in first or second place.”¹⁷⁵ The “talk” does not try to preserve a regular arrangement as other speeches do. In fact, “the best arrangement in a ‘talk’ is to avoid proceeding always on the same track, but to display continuous disorder.”¹⁷⁶ Menander also observes that the “talk” seems to fall under both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, for it fulfills the needs of both.¹⁷⁷ One can use this form to praise a ruler, for example, or to give advice to one’s audience. Indeed, in this respect, Menander finds this type of speech extremely useful since an orator can appropriately elaborate on any subject of his choosing.¹⁷⁸

It appears, then, that the book of Hebrews can be classified according to a type of speech analogous to the “talk.” Hebrews evinces both epideictic and deliberative types of rhetoric. It praises Jesus, while also urging the audience to adopt a certain course of action. Moreover, in its praise of Jesus, it does not follow a neat outline of encomiastic topics, but employs the topics as it sees fit throughout the discourse.

While the book of Hebrews does not seem to be neatly arranged, then, according to an encomiastic topic list, it is apparent that the author does

¹⁷⁴ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 391 (Russell and Wilson).

¹⁷⁵ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 392 (Russell and Wilson).

¹⁷⁶ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 391 (Russell and Wilson).

¹⁷⁷ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 388.

¹⁷⁸ Menander, *Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 394.

utilize encomiastic topics to praise Jesus. Among the topics that can be discerned in Hebrews are: names, nature, origin/birth, training/education, offices, speeches, actions/achievements, and noble death. We will explore these topics in greater depth in chapter four.

Amplification and Minimization

Related to the topics of praise are the strategies of *amplification* (αὔξησις, *amplificatio*) and *minimization* (ταπείνωσις). Aristotle notes that “amplification is with good reason ranked as one of the forms of praise, since it consists in superiority, and superiority is one of the things that are noble.”¹⁷⁹ Pseudo-Aristotle explains it this way: “The eulogistic species of oratory consists, to put it briefly, in the amplification of creditable purposes and actions and speeches and the attribution of qualities that do not exist, while the vituperative species is the opposite, the minimization of creditable qualities and the amplification of discreditable ones.”¹⁸⁰ To put it another way: encomiastic speeches emphasize a person’s strengths and virtues, while downplaying a person’s weaknesses and shortcomings. Vituperative rhetoric does the opposite; it highlights an opponent’s weakness and shortcomings, while downplaying his or her strengths and virtues. He remarks that “materials for amplification are useful in the other species of oratory as well, but it is in eulogy and vituperation that they are most efficacious.”¹⁸¹

Aristotle elaborates on how amplification is employed in epideictic speeches. A person is praiseworthy when someone does something alone, or first, or with a few, or is chiefly responsible for it, or does something beyond expectations, or does something successfully repeatedly, and “if it is for his sake that distinctions which are an encouragement or honour have been invented and established; and if he was the first on whom an encomium was pronounced . . . or to whom a statue was set up in the market-place.”¹⁸² Theon similarly states that actions “are praised on the basis of the occasion and whether someone did them alone or was the first or when no one else acted, or did more than others or with few helpers or beyond what was characteristic of his age or contrary to expectation or

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.39 (Freese, LCL).

¹⁸⁰ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1425b (Rackham, LCL).

¹⁸¹ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1426b (Rackham, LCL). Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.40; 2.18.5.

¹⁸² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.38 (Freese, LCL).

with toils or because they were done very easily or quickly.”¹⁸³ Likewise, Quintilian declares that “what most pleases an audience is the celebration of deeds which our hero was the first or only man or at any rate one of the very few to perform: and to these we must add any other achievements which surpasses hope or expectation, emphasising what was done for the sake of others rather than what he performed on his own behalf.”¹⁸⁴

Pseudo-Aristotle highlights a number of methods that could be used in amplification. First, one can show that a person’s actions have produced many good or bad results. Second, one can cite a previous judgment, favorable or unfavorable, and then set one’s statement alongside it and compare, emphasizing the strong points of one’s argument and the weak points of the other, thus making one’s case appear stronger. Third, one can compare one’s comments to the smallest thing of a particular class of things, making one’s case appear larger. Fourth, if something has been judged a great good, one can mention something that is its opposite, making it appear a great evil, and vice versa. Fifth,

another possible way of magnifying good or bad actions is if you prove that the agent acted intentionally, arguing that he had long premeditated doing the acts, that he repeatedly set about doing them, that he went on doing them a long time, that no one else had attempted them before, that he did them in conjunction with persons whom no one else had acted with or in succession to persons whom no one else had followed, that he was acting willingly, that he was acting deliberately, that we should all be happy, or unfortunate, if we all acted like him.

Sixth, one can prove that someone was responsible for many things, thus making someone’s actions appear larger. Seventh, one must decide whether to divide up one’s matter into parts or state it as a whole, and then “state it in whichever way it makes a bigger show.” Minimization uses the opposite methods just described.¹⁸⁵

Quintilian says one should consider the word choice one uses. One can replace words with other words of stronger meaning for amplification, or words of lesser meaning, if one chooses to minimize. An example from Cicero will suffice: “I have brought before you, judges, not a thief, but a plunderer; not an adulterer, but a ravisher; not a mere committer of sacrilege, but the enemy of all religious observance and all holy things; not

¹⁸³ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110 (Kennedy).

¹⁸⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.16 (Butler, LCL).

¹⁸⁵ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1426a–b (Rackham, LCL).

an assassin, but a bloodthirsty butcher who has slain our fellow-citizens and our allies.”¹⁸⁶

Lucian discusses amplification when attempting to make a distinction between a person who legitimately praises and the flatterer who exaggerates:

The flatterer, since he praises for a selfish reason and has little regard for truth, thinks that he must praise everything to excess, telling falsehoods and contributing a great deal on his own account... if only he hoped to gain something by the lie. But the other, in praising the selfsame object, instead of telling any lie or adding any quality that did not belong to it, would take the good points that it had by nature, even if they were not very great, and would amplify them and make them greater.¹⁸⁷

Flatterers will not hesitate to lie to gain favor, while those who truly praise amplify what actually exists. Flatterers, moreover, employ hyperbole, while those who truly praise are more discreet.¹⁸⁸

Numerous other techniques can be used to develop the characterization of persons. In what follows we will be exploring a variety of techniques that *may* be used to develop characterization. These techniques may be used for other purposes as well, but our concern here is how these techniques can be used for characterization.

Synkrisis

Closely related to encomium and amplification is the method of *synkrisis* (σύγκρισις).¹⁸⁹ According to Aphthonius, *synkrisis* is a double encomium or double invective or a speech comprised of both.¹⁹⁰ Theon defines *synkrisis* as “language setting the better or the worse side by side.”¹⁹¹ He further notes that “syncrises are not comparisons of things having a great difference between them”; rather “comparisons should be of likes and

¹⁸⁶ As quoted in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.4.2 (Butler, LCL).

¹⁸⁷ Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture Defended* 20; edition used: *Lucian* (trans. A. M. Harmon; vol 4; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).

¹⁸⁸ Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture Defended* 21.

¹⁸⁹ In his section “On Synkrisis” Hermogenes says that “synkrisis has been included in common-place, where we *amplify* the misdeeds by comparison, and in encomion, where we *amplify* the good features of the subject by comparison, and also in invective...” (*Progymnasmata* 18 [Kennedy]; italics mine).

¹⁹⁰ Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 42. Cf. Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 60. As with encomia, syncrises can also be used for non-human subjects, but our concern here is to note how *synkrisis* is used to develop the characterization of persons.

¹⁹¹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 112 (Kennedy).

where we are in doubt which should be preferred because of no evident superiority of one to the other."¹⁹² By contrast, Hermogenes says "syncrisis is a comparison of similar or dissimilar things, or of lesser things to greater or greater things to lesser."¹⁹³ Synkrisis is also related to amplification since one can magnify one person by comparison with another.¹⁹⁴ Aristotle says that in amplification, if someone "does not furnish you with enough material in himself, you must compare him with others... And you must compare him with illustrious personages, for it affords ground for amplification."¹⁹⁵ Nicolaus notes that synkrisis can be "employed by itself as a whole discourse and when part of something else."¹⁹⁶ Synkrisis is useful not only for epideictic, but also judicial and deliberative speeches.¹⁹⁷

Like straight encomia, synkrisis are arranged according to the topics of praise.¹⁹⁸ Theon explains that when comparing persons (πρόσωπα), the speaker should begin with the external and bodily goods, such as good birth (εὐγένεια), education (παιδεία), good children (εὐτεκνία), offices held (ἀρχαί), reputation (δόξα), and the condition of their bodies (αἱ τοῦ σώματος διάθεσις).¹⁹⁹ Next the speaker compares actions (πράξεις), focusing upon deeds which can be magnified through the method of amplification. One gives preference to actions that are more beautiful, more numerous and greater than the other, more steadfast, more lasting, deeds that were done at a more crucial time, that brought greater benefit, that were done by choice rather than necessity or chance, that were extraordinary, were done with toil, or were done beyond expectation of the person's age or ability.²⁰⁰

Hermogenes also says that synkrisis should be arranged according to the encomiastic topics. One should compare things such as cities (πόλεις), family (γένος), nurture (τροφή), pursuits (ἐπιτηδεύματα), deeds (πράξεις), external factors (τὰ ἐκτός), manner of death (τρόπος θανάτων), and the

¹⁹² Theon, *Progymnasmata* 112–113 (Kennedy).

¹⁹³ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 18 (Kennedy). Nicolaus provides a more elaborate definition: "syncrisis is parallel scrutiny of goods or evils or persons or things, by which we try to show that the subjects under discussion are both equal to each other or that one is greater than the other" (*Progymnasmata* 60; [Kennedy]).

¹⁹⁴ *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1426b. Cf. Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 61.

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.38 (Freese, LCL).

¹⁹⁶ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 62 (Kennedy).

¹⁹⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 60–61.

¹⁹⁸ See Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 61.

¹⁹⁹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 113 (Kennedy).

²⁰⁰ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 113.

things after death (τὰ μετ' ἐκείνῃα).²⁰¹ When comparing activities, one should mention "those who first took up the activities" and "set those engaged in them side by side with each other in terms of the quality of mind and body."²⁰² Comparisons can be used to show the equality of two persons in some or many things; sometimes both persons are praised but one is better; and sometimes one blames one while praising the other.²⁰³

Nicolaus, likewise, states that synkrisis makes use of the same divisions as encomium. He does not, however, bother to list the topics since he mentioned them previously.

Common-Places

Another technique similar to encomium (and invective) and amplification is *topos* (τόπος) or *common-place* (κοινός τόπος). Theon defines *topos* as "language amplifying something that is acknowledged to be either a fault or a brave deed."²⁰⁴ Similarly, Nicolaus defines common-place as "an amplification and attack on an acknowledged evil; or as others define it, an amplification of an acknowledged evil or human goodness."²⁰⁵ Common-place differs from encomium in that encomium is directed more towards a specific person, whereas common-place is directed towards a type of person, such as a prostitute or an adulterer.²⁰⁶ Theon says there are two kinds: "one is an attack on those who have done evil deeds, for example, a tyrant, traitor, murderer, profligate; the other in favor of those who have done something good: for example, a tyrannicide, a hero, a lawgiver."²⁰⁷ These common-places can be combined, for example, towards a traitorous general or a temple-robbing priest.²⁰⁸ Aphthonius clearly explains that it is called a common-place because it is "fitting all in common who take part in the same deed; for speech against a traitor applies in common to all who share in the same deed."²⁰⁹ The common-place, then, is a starting point from which one can construct arguments directed towards a specific person.²¹⁰

²⁰¹ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 19 (Kennedy).

²⁰² Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 19 (Kennedy).

²⁰³ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 19.

²⁰⁴ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 106 (Kennedy).

²⁰⁵ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 36 (Kennedy).

²⁰⁶ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 36; Theon, *Progymnasmata* 106.

²⁰⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 106 (Kennedy).

²⁰⁸ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 106; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 37.

²⁰⁹ Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 32 (Kennedy).

²¹⁰ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 37.

Vivid Description

Some techniques deal with vivid description. Theon defines *ekphrasis* (ἐκφρασις) as “descriptive language, bringing what is portrayed clearly before the sight.”²¹¹ While ekphrasis can give a vivid description of a person’s appearance, it can also be used for events, actions, occasions, places, times, animals, and so forth.²¹² According to Theon, an ekphrasis is not concerned about passing moral judgment on the person (or thing) described, but is merely “a plain description of the subject.”²¹³ The advantages of ekphrasis is that it brings clarity (σαφήνεια) and vividness (ἐνάργεια).²¹⁴ It allows hearers to become spectators.²¹⁵ Moreover, the word choice should correspond to the nature of the subject.²¹⁶ Ekphrasis can be used in other kinds of exercises such as fables, narratives, common-places, and encomia.²¹⁷ While ekphrasis is usually part of a larger composition, there is nothing preventing it from standing on its own.²¹⁸ Nicolaus remarks that ekphrasis is useful for all three kinds of rhetoric.²¹⁹

Other similar expressions for vivid descriptions are used by the rhetorical handbooks. Theon, when discussing *topos*, says “we shall create vividness [διατύπωσις] whenever we describe the crime in the process of execution and the suffering of the one wronged.”²²⁰ He then proceeds to give an example of a murderer: one should describe in detail the kind of person who committed the murder, the manner in which it was done, and a blow-by-blow description of the act. Cicero expresses the same idea when discussing the *indignatio*—“a passage which results in arousing great hatred against some person, or violent offense at some action.”²²¹ In describing the act of a crime, the speaker should “by [his] language bring the action as vividly as possible before the eyes of the judge before whom [he is] pleading, so that a shameful act may seem as shameful as if he had

²¹¹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 118 (Kennedy).

²¹² Theon, *Progymnasmata* 118; Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 22; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 46; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 68.

²¹³ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 119 (Kennedy).

²¹⁴ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 23.

²¹⁵ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 68.

²¹⁶ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 23.

²¹⁷ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 23.

²¹⁸ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 70.

²¹⁹ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 70.

²²⁰ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 109 (Kennedy). Longinus uses the same word in *On the Sublime* 20.1.

²²¹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.53.100 (Hubbell, LCL).

himself been present and seen it in person.”²²² Pseudo-Cicero mentions a couple of terms related to description: portrayal (*effictio*) “consists in representing and depicting in words clearly enough for recognition the bodily form of some person”;²²³ while vivid description (*descriptio*) “is the name for the figure which contains a clear, lucid, and impressive exposition of the consequences of an act.”²²⁴

Quintilian expresses the same concept with different terminology. He states that “we must place among ornaments that ἐνάργεια which I mentioned in the rules which I laid down for the statement of facts, because vivid illustration [*evidentia*], or, as some prefer to call it, representation [*representatio*], is something more than mere clearness, since the latter merely lets itself be seen, whereas the former thrusts itself upon our notice.”²²⁵ One may, by this method, give a word-picture of a scene, or even present a scene in fuller detail so that the audience can visualize the scene, rather than just merely hear it. Later, Quintilian defines the figure of vivid illustration, *evidentia* or ὑποτύπωσις, as “any representation of facts which is made in such vivid language that they appeal to the eye rather than the ear.”²²⁶

By whatever term it is called, it is clear that the ancient orators were fond of using vivid description to describe a variety of things, including the physical appearance of persons. While physical appearance is not the most important aspect of human personality, it does contribute to the characterization of the person.

Chreia

Some of the techniques deal with speech. According to Theon, a *chreia* (χρεία) “is a brief saying or action making a point, attributed to some specified person or something corresponding to a person.”²²⁷ He distinguishes it from a maxim (γνώμη) and a reminiscence (ἀπομνημόνευμα). Chreiai differ from maxims in four ways:²²⁸

²²² Cicero, *De inventione* 1.53.104 (Hubbell, LCL). Cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.30.49 for the same idea.

²²³ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.63 (Caplan, LCL). According to Caplan (386), the equivalent expression in Greek is χαρακτήρισμός (characterization).

²²⁴ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.39.51 (Caplan, LCL).

²²⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.3.61 (Butler, LCL).

²²⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.40 (Butler, LCL). See also 9.2.58 where Quintilian equates ὑποτύπωσις with the imitation of a deed.

²²⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 96 (Kennedy).

²²⁸ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 96–97. Cf. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 6–7.

1. Chreiai are always attributed to a person; maxims are not always.
2. Chreiai can state a universal or a particular; maxims are always universal.
3. Chreiai are sometimes not useful for life; maxims are always useful for life.
4. Chreiai are actions and/or sayings; maxims are only sayings.

Chreiai differ from reminiscences in two ways:²²⁹

1. Chreiai are brief; reminiscences are sometimes extended.
2. Chreiai are attributed to particular persons; reminiscences are remembered for their own sake.

Theon says that chreiai can be verbal or an action, or a combination of both.²³⁰ In addition, chreiai can be divided into *declarative*, in which the statements are volunteered by the speaker, and *responsive* which are four types:²³¹

1. Response to a question—agreement or disagreement; yes or no
2. Response to an inquiry—longer answer
3. Giving the cause for the answer to a question
4. Apocritical—response to a statement

Chreiai can be double, when two persons speak. Actional chreiai can be active or passive.

While chreiai are short, they nevertheless can reveal character. Chreiai can demonstrate that a person is witty, wise, virtuous, or any other such traits. The chreiai can reveal the values of the speaker. This becomes clear in Hermogenes' discussion. Hermogenes says that one could elaborate on a chreia by attaching a brief encomium of the speaker, for example, "Isocrates was wise."²³² Theon also remarks that chreiai are useful for creating character (*ῥῆθος*) "while we are being exercised in the moral sayings of the wise."²³³ Theon concludes his discussion of chreia by noting: "one should

²²⁹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 97.

²³⁰ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 97; Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 6; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 23; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 20.

²³¹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 97.

²³² Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 7 (Kennedy). Cf. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 23–24; Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 23–24.

²³³ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 60 (Kennedy).

here also use whatever amplification and digression and characterization is possible.”²³⁴

Attributed or Invented Speech

There are a number of terms that refer to attributed or invented speech that is put into the mouth of speakers. However, there is not universal agreement on the meaning of these words. Pseudo-Cicero describes dialogue (*sermocinatio*) as “putting in the mouth of some person language in keeping with his character [*personae*].”²³⁵ He gives one example of the speech of a wise man which reveals his willingness to undergo perils on behalf of his country.²³⁶ In a second example, he describes an encounter between a soldier, a rich man, and his wife. The dialogue that ensues evinces the character of each person in the story.²³⁷ According to Quintilian, there were some rhetoricians who regarded imaginary conversations between people as *διάλογοι* or *sermocinatio*, but Quintilian subsumes this under the heading of *προσωποποιῖα*.²³⁸

The term *προσωποποιῖα* has been variously translated as “speech-in-character,” “impersonation,” and “personification,” thus demonstrating the wide-ranging nature of the term.²³⁹ One equivalent expression in Latin appears to be *conformatio*, which Pseudo-Cicero says “consists in representing an absent person as present, or in making a mute thing or one lacking form articulate, and attributing to it a definite form and a language or a certain behaviour appropriate to its character.”²⁴⁰ For the former, he gives the example of a speech that would supposedly be given by Lucius Brutus come back to life again (the later progymnasmatisms would describe the invented speech of a dead person as *εἰδωλοποιῖα*).²⁴¹ He illustrates the latter with a speech that a city would make were it given voice. The latter example falls in line more with the current English connotation of “personification.”

²³⁴ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 106 (Kennedy).

²³⁵ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.42.55 (Caplan, LCL). Cf. 4.52.65 for a similar description.

²³⁶ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.43.55.

²³⁷ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.52.65.

²³⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.31.

²³⁹ Butts bemoans the lack of consistency among translators in translating the term *προσωποποιῖα*. He says the phrase, “speech-in-character” is the most accurate term, but it is a cumbersome phrase (“*Progymnasmata*,” 457–460).

²⁴⁰ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.53.66 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁴¹ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 20; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 44. See the discussion on page 143.

Quintilian has a broad understanding of the term *prosopopoeiae* or προσωποποιῖα, which he defines as fictitious speeches of other persons (*fictae alienarum personarum orationes*).²⁴² Examples are when an advocate puts words in the mouth of his client,²⁴³ or when an orator depicts the inner thoughts of his opponents, or introduces conversations between himself and others, or of others among themselves.²⁴⁴ Prosopopoeiae may also include speech of the gods, of dead persons, of cities, or of peoples as a whole.²⁴⁵ The persons depicted may be real or imaginary.²⁴⁶ In addition, prosopopoeiae may also include abstractions (e.g., Fame, Virtue, Pleasure, Life and Death) or an unspecified imaginary person (e.g., “Someone will say”), or speech can be used without mentioning the speaker.²⁴⁷ It is also possible to introduce imaginary writings such as letters.²⁴⁸ In all cases, the speech must be appropriate to the speaker(s) in order to be convincing to the audience. Elsewhere, Quintilian declares that when orators “introduced fictitious personages [*personae*] and speak through other’s lips, [they] must therefore allot the appropriate character [*mores*] to those to whom [they] lend a voice.”²⁴⁹ In another place, Quintilian explains that speeches must “be adapted to suit the position [*condicio*] and character [*vita*] of those for whom they were written.”²⁵⁰ He observes that when Cicero wrote speeches,

did he not rather bear in mind the fortune [*fortuna*], rank [*dignitas*] and achievements [*gesta*] of each single individual and represent the character of all to whom he gave a voice so that though they spoke better than they could by nature, they still might seem to speak in their own persons? For a speech which is out of keeping with the man who delivers it is just as faulty as the speech which fails to suit the subject to which it should conform.²⁵¹

Prosopopoeiae demands great skill since the speaker may have to portray a variety of different persons. Quintilian exclaims that “the same speaker has on one occasion to impersonate Caesar, on another Cicero or Cato.”²⁵²

²⁴² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 6.1.25.

²⁴³ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 6.1.25.

²⁴⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.30.

²⁴⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.31.

²⁴⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.32.

²⁴⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.36–37.

²⁴⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.34.

²⁴⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.39 (Butler, LCL).

²⁵⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.50 (Butler, LCL).

²⁵¹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.50–51 (Butler, LCL).

²⁵² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.49 (Butler, LCL).

The speaker may have to portray children, women, nations, even mute things according to their appropriate character.²⁵³ He declares that orators “impersonate sons, parents, rich men, old men, gentle or harsh of temper, misers, superstitious persons, cowards and mockers, so that hardly even comic actors have to assume more numerous roles in their performances on the stage than these in their declamations.”²⁵⁴

Prosopopoeiae not only benefits orators, but poets and historians as well.²⁵⁵ Theon notes that prosopopoeia (προσωποποιΐα) “is not only an historical exercise but applicable also to oratory and dialogue and poetry, and is most advantageous in everyday life and in our conversations with each other, and (understanding of it) is most useful in study of prose writings.”²⁵⁶

Theon defines prosopopoeia as “the introduction of a person to whom words are attributed that are suitable to the speaker and have an indisputable application to the subject discussed.”²⁵⁷ The speaker and occasion may be indefinite (what words would a general say to his soldiers in time of danger?) or definite (what words would Cyrus say when marching against the Massagetae?).²⁵⁸

When constructing a prosopopoeia, the orator should keep in mind the personality (πρόσωπον) of the speaker. The orator should consider the age (ἡλικία; whether young or old), nature (φύσις; male or female), social status (τύχη; slave or free), activities (ἐπιτήδευμα; soldier or farmer), state of mind (διάθεσις; lover or temperate), and origins (γένος; Laconia or Attica).²⁵⁹ Notice that many of these components corresponds to the properties of the person mentioned with reference to narrative.²⁶⁰ Prosopopoeia reveals character because it is “involved with the invention of words appropriate to the persons who are introduced.”²⁶¹

Later progymnasmatis, however, have a slightly different understanding of what prosopopoeia is. For both Hermogenes and Aphthonius, *ethopoeia* (ἠθοποιΐα) corresponds to Theon’s prosopopoeia. The term ethopoeia refers to the imitation (μίμησις) of the character of a person speaking.²⁶²

²⁵³ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.41.

²⁵⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.51 (Butler, LCL).

²⁵⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.8.49.

²⁵⁶ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 60 (Kennedy).

²⁵⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 115 (Kennedy).

²⁵⁸ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 115.

²⁵⁹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 115–116 (Kennedy).

²⁶⁰ See Theon, *Progymnasmata* 78.

²⁶¹ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 120 (Kennedy).

²⁶² Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 20; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 44.

Ethopoeia deals with a real person and only invents the character (ἦθος) of the person, hence it is “character-making.” Prosopopoeia, by contrast, personifies things or non-existing persons. Hence, it is “person-making” since both the person and the character are created simultaneously.²⁶³ Nicolaus acknowledges that rhetoricians differ regarding the meaning of prosopopoeia and ethopoeia, but he declares that “those who have the best opinion think that in ethopoeia real persons are specified, while prosopopoeia is that in which we invent persons and attribute words to them.”²⁶⁴ In addition, both Hermogenes and Aphthonius add a third term, *eidolopoeia* (εἰδολοποιῖα; “apparition-making”), which attributes words to a known person who is now deceased.²⁶⁵

Ethopoeia can contain either definite or indefinite persons. They can also be single, when one person speaks alone, or double, when one person speaks to another. Ethopoeia can be primarily ethical (ἠθικαί), when the characterization of the speaker dominates; emotional (παθητικάί), when the emotions of the speaker dominate; or a mixture of both. As always, the speech must be appropriate to the persons and occasions involved. Finally, when elaborating on an ethopoeia, one should begin with the present, then return to the past, and then proceed to the future.²⁶⁶ Nicolaus states that ethopoeia is useful for all three types of rhetoric and for letter writing.²⁶⁷

With regard to Quintilian, it should be noted that his conception of ethopoeia differs slightly from these later progymnasmatisers. For him ethopoeia (ἠθοποιῖα) is equivalent to μίμησις or the “imitation [*imitatio*] of other person’s characteristics [*mores*].”²⁶⁸ Ethopoeia may include the imitation of words (*dicta*) or deeds (*facta*). If the imitation deals with deeds, then it is very similar to the device of ὑποτύπωσις.²⁶⁹

Finally, we turn to Pseudo-Cicero who describes the device of character delineation or *notatio* as “describing a person’s character [*natura*] by the definite signs which, like distinctive marks, are attributes of that character.”²⁷⁰ This device seems to correspond with Quintilian’s conception of ethopoeia. Pseudo-Cicero proceeds to give an extended illustration of the device by describing the words and deeds of a man who pretends

²⁶³ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 20; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 44.

²⁶⁴ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 64–65 (Kennedy).

²⁶⁵ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 20; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 44.

²⁶⁶ Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 20–22; Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 45.

²⁶⁷ Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 66–67.

²⁶⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.58 (Butler, LCL).

²⁶⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.58.

²⁷⁰ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.63 (Caplan, LCL).

to be wealthy—the boastful man. The advantage of this device is that it “set[s] before [one’s] eyes a person’s whole character.”²⁷¹ Indeed, this device seems to greatly resemble Theophrastus’ character studies.

Literary Tropes

Another method that the ancients could use to develop characterization was through the use of a variety of literary tropes. Quintilian defines a trope (*tropus*) as “the artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another.”²⁷² Now, not all literary tropes can be used for characterization. The tropes that *may* be used for characterization usually involve the symbolic use of words and often employ some sort of comparison between human beings and other things. Examples of such tropes are metaphors, similes, comparisons, epithets, antonomasia, and allegory.

Quintilian considers metaphors (μεταφορά; *translatio*) to be the most beautiful of tropes.²⁷³ Pseudo-Cicero says that metaphor “occurs when a word applying to one thing is transferred to another, because the similarity seems to justify this transference.”²⁷⁴ Quintilian explains that a noun or verb is transferred from its literal usage to a more figurative usage in order to make one’s meaning clearer or to provide an artistic effect.²⁷⁵ In order for the metaphor to be effective, it must be appropriate, that is, there must be enough of a likeness between the two things being compared that the resemblance is easily recognizable.²⁷⁶ Demetrius says that metaphors should not be “far-fetched, but natural and based on a true analogy.”²⁷⁷ He gives the following illustration: “There is a resemblance . . . between a general, a pilot, and a charioteer; for they are all in command. Accordingly, it can safely be said that a general ‘pilots’ the State, and conversely that a pilot ‘commands’ the ship.”²⁷⁸ Metaphors are effective means of characterization because the qualities inherent in the metaphor are transferred to the person to whom it is being applied. For example, in the statement, “Odysseus is a lion,” the qualities associated with the lion (strength or courage) are now applied to Odysseus.

²⁷¹ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.51.65 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁷² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.1 (Butler, LCL).

²⁷³ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.4.

²⁷⁴ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.34.45 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁷⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.5–6.

²⁷⁶ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.2.9–12; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.6, 14–18.

²⁷⁷ Demetrius, *On Style* 2.78. The following edition was used: Demetrius, *On Style* (trans. W. Rhys Roberts; rev. ed.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

²⁷⁸ Demetrius, *On Style* 2.78 (Roberts, LCL).

Epithets (ἐπιθέτα; *epitheton; appositum; sequens*) are closely related to metaphors. In fact, Aristotle treats the two together in his discussion of metaphors.²⁷⁹ Epithets should be suitable to the words to which they are applied.²⁸⁰ Epithets can be used to honor or dishonor persons, or to heap abuse or praise upon a person.²⁸¹ Orestes, for example, could be described either dishonorably, “the matricide,” or honorably, “the avenger of his father.”²⁸²

Quintilian identifies the trope *antonomasia* (called *pronominatio* in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*) as the substitution of something else for a proper name.²⁸³ The substitution can take place in one of two ways. First, one may substitute an epithet which is equivalent to a name. Second, one may replace a name with “the most striking characteristics of an individual . . . or from acts clearly indicating the individual.”²⁸⁴ He explains the difference between an epithet and an antonomasia:

[An epithet] is not always a *trope*, but if separated from the word to which it belongs, it has a significance of its own and forms an *antonomasia*. For if you say, “The man who destroyed Numantia and Carthage,” it will be an *antonomasia*, whereas, if you add the word “Scipio,” the phrase will be an *epithet*. An epithet therefore cannot stand by itself.²⁸⁵

Pseudo-Cicero explains the advantages of *pronominatio*: “we shall be able, not without elegance, in praise and in censure, concerning physical attributes, qualities of character, or external circumstances, to express ourselves by using a kind of epithet in place of the precise name.”²⁸⁶ In other words, this literary device allows the orator to use epithets to characterize a person with regard to all three divisions of the encomiastic topics.

The simile (εἰκὼν; εἰκασία; *imago; similitudo*) is akin to the metaphor.²⁸⁷ Pseudo-Cicero defines the simile as “the comparison of one figure with another, implying a certain resemblance between them.”²⁸⁸ Quintilian

²⁷⁹ See, for example, *Rhetoric* 3.2.9, 14–15; 3.3.3. Demetrius also discusses epithets in conjunction with metaphors; see *On Style* 2.85.

²⁸⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.40.

²⁸¹ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.2.10.

²⁸² Aristotle uses this example without naming Orestes (*Rhetoric* 3.2.14).

²⁸³ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.29; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.31.42. The Greek term is ἀντωνομασία.

²⁸⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.29 (Butler, LCL).

²⁸⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.43 (Butler, LCL).

²⁸⁶ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.31.42 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.4.1; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.8. Demetrius calls it “an expanded metaphor”; see *On Style* 2.80 (Roberts, LCL).

²⁸⁸ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.62 (Caplan, LCL).

explains that the difference between metaphor and simile is “that in the latter we compare some object to the thing which we wish to describe, whereas in the former this object is actually substituted for the thing.”²⁸⁹ Similes, like metaphors, must be suitable. Pseudo-Cicero, in particular, notes that similes can be used for either the praise or censure of a person.²⁹⁰

Pseudo-Cicero also mentions the comparison (*similitudo*; the Greek equivalent is *παράβολή*)²⁹¹ which he defines as “a manner of speech that carries over an element of likeness from one thing to a different thing.”²⁹² Comparisons take on four forms: contrast, negation, abridged comparison, and detailed parallel. He remarks that the “resemblance between the two things need not apply throughout, but must hold on the precise point of comparison.”²⁹³ Lucian says that in laudatory writings,

the eulogist must employ comparisons [*εἰκόνων*] and similes [*ὁμοίωσις*], and really the most important part of it is to make successful comparisons. And success would be most likely to be held attained, not if a man compares like to like, or if he makes his comparison with something that is inferior, but if he approximates, in so far as he may, what he is praising to something that surpasses it.²⁹⁴

Allegory (*ἀλληγορία*; *allegoria*; *permutatio*; *inversio*) is the last trope we will consider in detail. Quintilian says allegory “either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words.”²⁹⁵ Allegory usually utilizes a number of metaphors (and sometimes similes), with each metaphor representing something else. Hence, as with metaphors and similes, the qualities attributed to one thing may be transferred to describe the character of a person.

Pseudo-Cicero and Quintilian present numerous tropes that can be used in oratory.²⁹⁶ It is not difficult to imagine that any number of these could be employed in the service of characterization. For example, irony (*εἰρωνεία*; *ironia*; *illusio*), which is understanding “something which is the

²⁸⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.8 (Butler, LCL).

²⁹⁰ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.62.

²⁹¹ See Demetrius, *On Style* 2.90; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 5.10.125.

²⁹² *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.45.59 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁹³ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.48.61 (Caplan, LCL).

²⁹⁴ Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture Defended* 19 (Harmon, LCL).

²⁹⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.44 (Butler, LCL); cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.34.46 for a similar definition.

²⁹⁶ *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.13.19–4.46.69; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.1–76.

opposite of what is actually said,”²⁹⁷ may be used to “censure [someone] with counterfeited praise and praise under a pretense of blame.”²⁹⁸ Hyperbole (ὑπερβολή; *hyperbole*) may be used in the amplification or minimization of someone’s character. Devices such as synecdoche and metonymy may also contribute to characterization when applied to people. Such examples may extend to the other tropes as well.

Testimony

We turn to one more method that can be used to develop characterization: the use of testimony.²⁹⁹ In *Topica*, Cicero says there are two groups of topics from which arguments are drawn. In the first group, the topics are intrinsic or inherent to the subject matter at hand. The second group includes topics that are extrinsic, that is, they are brought in from without.³⁰⁰ This second group relies on testimony (*testimonium*), which Cicero defines as “everything that is brought in from some external circumstance in order to win conviction.”³⁰¹ Testimony is based on some type of authority. This authority is derived from two sources: from someone’s nature (*natura*) or from circumstances (*tempus*). Authority from nature is dependent on virtue. Authority from circumstances is based on a host of things such as “talent, wealth, age, good luck, skill, experience, necessity, and even at times a concurrence of fortuitous events.”³⁰² Public opinion holds that the talented, wealthy, and aged are credible witnesses. Those with skill and experience are also deemed to be reliable witnesses because of their knowledge. Testimony by necessity may be derived from a variety of physical or mental means such as through torture or through some emotional stress such as grief, lust, anger, or fear.³⁰³ Sometimes the truth is revealed through fortuitous circumstances such as through comments by children, or by someone asleep, intoxicated, or insane, or

²⁹⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.44 (Butler, LCL). Pseudo-Aristotle defines irony as “saying something while pretending not to say it, or calling things by the opposite of their real names” (*Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1434a; Rackham, LCL).

²⁹⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.55 (Butler, LCL).

²⁹⁹ For a detailed study of testimony, see James R. McConnell, “The Topos of Divine Testimony in Luke-Acts” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009).

³⁰⁰ Cicero, *Topica* 2.8; 19.72. The following edition was used: Cicero, *Topica* (trans. H. M. Hubbell; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949).

³⁰¹ Cicero, *Topica* 19.73 (Hubbell, LCL).

³⁰² Cicero, *Topica* 19.73 (Hubbell, LCL).

³⁰³ Cicero, *Topica* 20.74.

through some inadvertence.³⁰⁴ Public opinion is also a kind of “testimony of the multitude.”³⁰⁵

Cicero explains that the “testimony which produces conviction through virtue is of two kinds; one sort gets its efficacy by nature, the other acquires it by hard work.”³⁰⁶ For the first, the gods are supremely virtuous by their nature. In the latter case, human beings earn virtue through hard work (*industria*). The testimony of the gods can be outlined as follows:³⁰⁷

1. Utterances; oracles
2. Works
 - a. The order and beauty of the heavens
 - b. Flights of birds and their songs
 - c. Sounds and fire from heaven
 - d. Portents on earth
 - e. Entrails
 - f. Visions; dreams

Humans earn a virtuous reputation through genius, industry, learning, consistency in life, or approved goodness. The honored include public officials, orators, philosophers, poets, and historians, and their sayings and writings are often used as authority to win cases.³⁰⁸ Also, in the *De partitione oratoria*, the senior Cicero distinguishes between the two kinds of testimony: divine and human. Divine testimony includes oracles, auspices, prophecies, and the answers of priests and augurs and diviners. Human testimony is based on authority and is given either freely or under compulsion.³⁰⁹ The testimony of other people and the gods are important for the characterization of people, for it is not only the attributes of person that help reveal character, but also the opinions of other people and the gods.

SYNTHESIS AND APPLICATION

Having surveyed the theory and practice of characterization in both modern literary studies and ancient rhetoric, it is time to synthesize the results

³⁰⁴ Cicero, *Topica* 20.75.

³⁰⁵ Cicero, *Topica* 20.76 (Hubbell, LCL).

³⁰⁶ Cicero, *Topica* 20.76 (Hubbell, LCL).

³⁰⁷ Cicero, *Topica* 20.77 (Hubbell, LCL).

³⁰⁸ Cicero, *Topica* 20.78.

³⁰⁹ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 2.6.

and to apply them to the book of Hebrews. We will first return to my definition of character.

At the beginning of chapter two, character was defined as *a construct of the totality of traits and attributes belonging to a particular human or non-human figure in a given story*. Orators construct the character of persons in speeches in much the same way that authors construct characters in narrative genres. As already noted, even though orators may be dealing with real persons, they are still engaged in interpretation and the interpretation of real persons involves characterization.

The author of Hebrews was likewise engaged in the construction of Jesus' character in his discourse. While the majority of scholars would acknowledge that Jesus was a historical figure, a large number of scholars do not agree with the depiction of Jesus in the early Christian writings, including Hebrews. The purpose of this study is not to assess whether the author of Hebrews accurately portrays the character of Jesus, but to ascertain what techniques the author employs in his construction of Jesus' character, what the resulting picture is, and how the author's construction of Jesus' character is important for the overall argument of the discourse.

In chapter two there was some discussion on types of characters. We will consider this matter only briefly since such categories are not particularly illuminating. As we have seen, there has been a proliferation of terminology in an attempt to describe different types of characters and the roles they play within the overall narrative of stories. Characters are more apt to fall along a spectrum rather than into neat categories. The characters of Hebrews may be classified according to *major*, *intermediate*, and *minor* characters (corresponding to Harvey's protagonists, intermediate figures, and background characters). Certainly, two of the major characters in the storyline of Hebrews are God and Jesus. They appear prominently throughout the discourse from the very beginning (1:1–4) up to the very end (13:20–21). Their characters are the most developed throughout the discourse. We would also have to include the author (i.e., the narrator) and his audience among the major characters in the story. In many of the hortatory sections, as well as in the personal remarks at the end, the author addresses his audience directly and he often identifies himself with the audience (2:1–4; 3:1, 12; 4:1–3, 11, 14–16; 5:11–6:12, 18–20; 7:26; 10:19–39; 12:1–29; 13:1–25). It is possible to do a character analysis of the author and/or his audience from these texts.

Intermediate characters have prominence in some parts of the text but do not appear consistently throughout the discourse. Moreover, their characters are somewhat developed but not to the extent that God's and Jesus' are. The intermediate characters often function as foils against

which to compare or contrast Jesus' character. Intermediate characters might include angels (chapters 1–2; 12:22; 13:2), Moses (3:2–6, 16; 7:14; 8:5; 9:19–21; 10:28; 11:23–29; 12:21), Abraham (2:16; 6:13–15; 7:1–10; 11:8–12, 17–19), the Levitical priests (5:1–4; 7:5, 9, 11–12, 23, 27–28; 8:3; 9:6–7; 10:11), and Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1–11, 15, 17).

Minor characters are not well developed and usually are mentioned only in passing. Minor characters would include the devil (2:14), Abel (11:4; 12:24), Joshua (4:8), Esau (11:20; 12:16–17), the heroes of faith of Israel's history (11:4–7, 20–23, 30–40), and Timothy (13:23).

Since we will be focusing on the characterization of Jesus in this study, we will briefly consider Bal's five criteria for identifying the hero of a narrative:³¹⁰

1. *Qualification*: while we are not told about Jesus' appearance, we are told a little about his background (he was from the tribe of Judah; 7:14) and divine origin (chapter 1). We are also given glimpses into Jesus' psychology (5:7) and motivations (2:11–18; 4:15; 10:5–7).

2. *Distribution*: Jesus appears often in the discourse (although he appears more prominently in some places than others, he appears at least once in every chapter) and is present at key moments in the story (creation, redemption, exaltation etc.).

3. *Independence*: Jesus does appear alone in the discourse and has "monologues" (2:12–13; 5:7; 10:5–7).

4. *Function*: Jesus alone performs certain actions (becoming like humans, offering himself as a sacrifice, exaltation, intercession etc.).

5. *Relations*: Jesus maintains relations with the largest number of characters. Not only does he have an intimate relationship with God (1:1–14; 3:2; 5:7; 8:1; 9:24; 10:5–7, 12; 12:2), but he maintains solidarity with human beings (2:11–18; 4:15) and saves them, helps them, intercedes for them, and so forth. In turn, the audience is urged to relate to Jesus in some way (3:1, 6, 14; 4:14–16; 10:19–23; 12:1–3; 13:13). Moreover, it is Jesus who is compared and contrasted to the intermediate figures in the discourse. Clearly, Jesus is the "hero" of the story contained in the book of Hebrews.

Scholars have generally recognized that the prologue (1:1–4) of the book of Hebrews functions like a prooemium or exordium (or part of the exordium) of a speech. As already noted, it was often appropriate to mention the persons involved in a case or from the subject matter itself in order to

³¹⁰ See chapter two, page 59; Bal, *Narratology*, 132.

secure the goodwill of the audience.³¹¹ In this instance, since Hebrews is not a forensic speech, the author chooses not to focus upon himself or the audience, but upon the subject matter of his speech, which also happens to be a person! Hebrews thus begins with exorbitant praise of its subject, Jesus.

Similar to some narrative works, the exordium of Hebrews begins with a descriptive portrait of its main protagonist. In chapter two we saw that David Daiches identifies three basic ways of presenting character.³¹² Of the three, Hebrews most closely conforms to the first way: Hebrews begins with a descriptive portrait of Jesus and then elaborates upon and confirms the initial portrait. While it is hard to call it a “complete” portrait, much of the portrait is the basis for what follows. While the author does not mention some of the descriptors (“heir of all things,” “reflection of God’s glory,” “imprint of God’s very being”) again in the discourse, these descriptors are important for highlighting Jesus’ divinity which the author does elaborate upon in chapter 1. The final two statements (“made purification for sins,” “sat down at the right hand” of God) succinctly summarize Jesus’ priestly and royal roles which the author expounds upon in the remainder of the discourse.

Many of the modern literary techniques of characterization highlighted in chapter two show great affinities with the ancient rhetorical techniques of characterization analyzed in this chapter. While the author of Hebrews primarily uses the indirect method of characterization, there are several instances in which he directly characterizes Jesus. For example, in 2:17 he describes him as a “merciful and faithful high priest” (ἐλεήμων . . . καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς). Again, in 3:2 the author tells us that Jesus was “faithful” (πιστόν) to God. The author also claims that Jesus was “without sin” (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας; 4:15) and “without blemish” (ἄμωμον; 9:14). In 5:7 the author declares that Jesus’ prayer was heard because of his reverence or piety (εὐλάβεια). In 7:26 the author piles up adjectives, describing Jesus as “holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens” (ὁσιος ἄκακος ἀμίαντος, κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος). More often than not, though, the author utilizes the indirect method for characterizing Jesus, and this method requires that readers make inferences from the information that he provides.

We first considered “external” or “environmental” sources for characterization, which include names and epithets, titles, age, gender, physical appearance, habitual posture and expressions, clothing and possessions,

³¹¹ See pages 106–8.

³¹² See page 59.

environment, socio-economic status, ethnicity or nationality, occupation or profession, and educational background. Many of these things find correlations in the encomiastic topics lists that we considered in this chapter. Pseudo-Aristotle calls them “goods external to virtue”; Cicero calls them in one dialogue “favors of fortune”; others rhetoricians divide these goods into “external circumstances,” and “physical attributes” or “physical endowments” (Pseudo-Cicero, Quintilian); while still others classify them under the “goods of the body” and “external goods” (Theon, Nicolaus, Cicero). Some of these sources also are found on the non-epideictic topic lists of the attributes of the person (Theon, Cicero, Quintilian).

The author of Hebrews utilizes some, but not all, of these topics for the characterization of persons; the author chooses the topics most important for his argument. The author sometimes draws significance from names. For instance, the author characterizes Melchizedek from the etymology of his name as “king of righteousness.” He also points out that he was the king of Salem, meaning “king of peace” (7:2). The author, however, never draws any inferences from the names “Jesus” or “Christ.” These names, nevertheless, may hint at important aspects of Jesus’ roles in the book of Hebrews. As will be noted in chapter four, the name “Jesus” means “God saves” which suggests his important role in God’s plan of salvation, and “Christ” means “anointed one” which intimates both his priestly and royal roles.

While the author of Hebrews utilizes vivid description in his discourse, he does not mention Jesus’ physical appearance,³¹³ clothing, or possessions. The author employs ekphrases of the earthly tabernacle in 9:1–5 and of the theophany at Mount Sinai and the heavenly hosts of Mount Zion in 12:18–24.³¹⁴ However, these ekphrases do not directly characterize Jesus (except for the concluding title in 12:24: “mediator of a new covenant”). It does appear that the author uses a type of vivid description—perhaps best termed as a *diatyposis*—of Jesus’ activity in 5:7: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death.”

The author of Hebrews does not make an issue out of Jesus’ gender, nor does he mention his age, though he does declare that Jesus has an “indestructible life” (7:16) and he suggests his eternity in several places (1:8, 11–12; 7:24–25, 28; 13:8). The author only mentions one background detail

³¹³ Although there may be an allusion to his physical perfection in 9:14: he was without blemish. See discussion of this passage in chapter four.

³¹⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 9.

about Jesus' life: Jesus was descended from the tribe of Judah (7:14). The paucity of details about Jesus' appearance and background suggests their relative unimportance for the author's construction of Jesus' character. The author does utilize some details about Jesus' background in order to praise him. He does emphasize Jesus' divine origin in chapter 1 and he briefly mentions his educational background when he declares that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8).

As we have seen in our survey of the encomiastic topic lists, goods of the body and external goods were not as important as the goods of the mind or virtues in praising the character of a person. This prioritizing of topics shows affinities to Robert Alter's scale of means, which ranks different sources for characterization according to their reliability in revealing the character of a literary figure. Moreover, an orator was not required to utilize all of the topics in an encomium, but could select those topics which were most applicable to the person in question and could provide the greatest force in persuasion. This strategy was utilized by the author of Hebrews.

Actions are one of the most important means in literature for revealing character indirectly. Actions certainly find plenty of correlation in the encomiastic topics lists as actions, deeds, achievements, and the like. Rhetoricians equally recognized that actions were one of the most important sources for revealing the virtues of a person. The book of Hebrews is replete with actions committed by Jesus. For instance, Jesus creates (1:10), purifies (1:3), cleanses (9:14), sanctifies (2:11; 10:10; 13:12), delivers (2:15), gives help (2:18), saves (7:25), redeems (9:12), sacrifices himself (7:27; 9:25–26; 10:12), trusts (2:13), prays (5:7), intercedes (7:25), mediates (9:15), sympathizes (4:15), proclaims (2:12), sings praise (2:12), endures (12:2–3), enters heaven (6:20; 9:12, 24), and sits at the right hand of God (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). All of these actions potentially reveal something about Jesus' character. These actions will be explored in greater depth in chapter four.

In rhetoric an orator can emphasize or downplay a person's actions through amplification or minimization. The author of Hebrews makes sufficient use of amplification. For example, Jesus is the *only* one to experience all manner of temptation and yet be without sin (4:15). The fact that Jesus is designated a forerunner implies that he is the *first* one to enter into heaven. While doing something successfully repeatedly is impressive, Jesus supersedes that by offering himself *once* as a sacrifice which has permanent efficacy; it does not need to be repeated (7:27; 9:12, 25–28; 10:12, 14). Moreover, the deeds that Jesus performed were done for the benefit of others and not for himself (2:9, 14–18; 5:9; 6:20; 7:25; 9:12, 14, 24, 28; 10:10).

Jesus' deeds have also produced many good results: the purification (1:3), forgiveness (10:18), and removal (9:26) of sin; the cleansing of consciences (9:14; 10:23); the deliverance (2:15), atonement (2:17), salvation (2:10; 5:9; 7:25; 9:28), redemption (9:12), perfection (7:11; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 12:2), and sanctification (2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12) of believers; the disabling of the devil's power (2:14); and the making available to believers the hope of access to God (7:19; 10:19–20), and the obtaining of an eternal inheritance (9:15).

As noted in chapter two, speech is also one of the most important means of characterization in literature because it helps to uncover a character's thoughts, feelings, and motives. Speech also finds a correlation on the rhetorical topics lists. While it is impossible for orators to really know the inner life of other persons, this has not stopped orators from attributing thoughts, feelings, and motives to other persons. Speech was often conveyed in rhetorical orations through techniques like *chreia* and *prosopopoeia/ethopoeia*. In the technique of *prosopopoeia/ethopoeia* it was quite common for orators to invent speeches that were appropriate to the characters they were discussing.

While the author of Hebrews does not utilize *chreia*, it is evident that he does make use of a form of *prosopopoeia* or *ethopoeia*.³¹⁵ Hebrews is unique among the NT writings in its method of Scripture citation. Other NT writings, for instance, use such expressions as "it is written" or "Scripture says" or some other equivalent expression. Frequently, other NT writings will attribute quotations directly to an individual such as Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or simply identify the author as "the prophet." Hebrews, by contrast, often places Scripture quotations directly into the mouths of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, as if they themselves had spoken the words. Depending on how one identifies quotations, there are around nineteen or so quotations attributed to God (1:5; 1:6, 7, 8–9, 10–12, 13; 4:3, 4; 5:5, 6; 6:14; 7:21; 8:5, 8–12; 10:30; 12:5–6, 26; 13:5). In addition, four quotations are clearly attributed to Jesus (2:12, 13; 10:5–7), and two to the Holy Spirit (3:7–11; 10:16–17). Only rarely does Hebrews acknowledge the human author of a Scripture citation. In Heb 4:7 he mentions David, and twice he quotes Moses (9:19; 12:21). It is evident, then, that the author of Hebrews makes use of a form of *prosopopoeia* when he places Scripture into the mouths of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In these instances, the

³¹⁵ To my knowledge, the first scholar to recognize that Hebrews uses *prosopopoeia* is Paolo Garuti, *Alle origini*, 23–24. Amy Peeler also discusses *ethopoeia* in her article "Ethos of God."

author of Hebrews did not have to “invent” the speech; he simply took the words of Scripture, which may have originally belonged to a different person and context, and placed them into the mouths of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit accordingly. The author’s conception of the divine origin of Scripture enabled him to make this kind of move. By analyzing the quotations put into the mouths of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, we can begin to reconstruct how the author of Hebrews conceived of their character. For the purposes of this study, however, we will examine only how the Scripture quotations are used to characterize Jesus. The quotations serve as a means of revealing the inner motivations of Jesus. For example, Jesus willingly identifies with humanity (2:12), trusts in God (2:13), and obeys God’s will (10:5–7). The book of Hebrews thus shows a similarity to Hebrew narrative in that it is sparing in its depiction of the inner life of Jesus. These quotations will be explored in greater depth in chapter four.

Another important technique of characterization in literary practice is revealing characters through their apposition to others. First, character can be revealed by the company that a person keeps. In rhetoric an orator can expound upon a person’s associations: family relationships, friendships, and other connections that one might have. In the book of Hebrews, God willingly identifies Jesus as his Son (1:5), while Jesus willingly shows solidarity with humanity (2:11–13). These associations help to shed light on the character of Jesus.

A character can also be revealed by the actions, speech, thought, and feelings of other characters towards that character. In speeches, not only can the orator convey the speech and actions of other people, but he can also relate what titles to fame or honors that a person has received. Moreover, an orator can appeal to testimony about a person’s character. The original witnesses to Jesus’ message confirmed the accuracy of Jesus’ message (2:3). Also, since both the author and audience seem to regard Israel’s Scriptures as authoritative, Scripture quotations become an important authoritative witness to the character of Jesus. However, they take on heightened significance in the way that the author of Hebrews employs them. Scripture is often put into the mouth of God and in some instances God is made to speak about Jesus (1:5–13; 5:5–6; 7:21). Hebrews thus uses Scripture as a type of *prosopopoeia* or *ethopoeia*, which simultaneously functions as divine testimony that enables us to reconstruct the character of Jesus. God also uses miraculous signs and wonders as an additional form of divine testimony to the character of Jesus (2:4). Furthermore, God’s actions towards Jesus reveal something about Jesus’ character. For example, God made the world through Jesus and speaks to humanity

through Jesus (1:2). God appointed Jesus as “heir of all things” (1:2) and as “high priest” (5:5–6, 10). God heard and answered Jesus’ prayers (5:7). He prepared his body for incarnation (10:5), but also raised him from the dead (13:20). All of these actions help to reveal Jesus’ character.

In literature, characters can also be revealed through comparison and contrast with other characters. In rhetoric, comparison and contrast are accomplished through the device of *synkrisis*. The book of Hebrews makes abundant use of explicit *synkrisis*, as well as using implicit comparisons and contrasts, to characterize Jesus. The author makes a clear comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek (7:3, 11, 15). There are several explicit *synkrisis* between Jesus and the prophets (1:1–2), angels (1:4–14), Moses (3:1–6), and the Levitical priests (5:1–10; 7:1–28). Since Jesus is the “mediator” of a new or better covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24), the author also contrasts Jesus’ sacrifice (9:12–14, 23, 25–26; 10:1–18; 13:11–12) and the heavenly sanctuary (8:2; 9:11, 24) in which he ministers to the sacrifices and sanctuary of the old covenant. Jesus is implicitly contrasted with Joshua (4:8), the heroes of faith in chapter 11 (12:1–3), and even with all of humanity (2:6–9).

Literary tropes (epithets, metaphors, similes, metonymy, analogy etc.) function the same way in both narrative and rhetorical genres. Hebrews abounds with figurative language, much of which can be used to reconstruct the character of Jesus. Hebrews frequently applies epithets to Jesus, some of which are also metaphorical in character; he is the firstborn (1:6), the pioneer of salvation (2:10), the pioneer and perfecter of faith (12:2), the apostle and high priest of our confession (3:1), the Son of God (4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29), the mediator of a new covenant (12:24), and the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20).³¹⁶ Hebrews also makes abundant use of metaphors. For example, Jesus is the reflection (or radiance) of God’s glory and the imprint of his being (1:3), and he is described as a forerunner (6:20) and a guarantee (7:22).³¹⁷ There are other promising metaphors for characterizing Jesus: he laid the foundations of the earth (1:10), his enemies are made a footstool for his feet (1:13; 10:13), he tasted death on behalf of everyone (2:9), and Christians are to run the race of faith as Jesus did (12:1–2). A series of similes are employed in 1:11–12 where Jesus’ eternity is contrasted with the heavens and the earth, which are likened to garments that can become old, rolled up, and changed. Another simile is

³¹⁶ “A minister in the sanctuary and the true tent” at 8:1 may also be considered an epithet.

³¹⁷ It is debatable whether the terms *Son*, *heir*, and *high priest* should be designated metaphors. It all depends on whether the author of Hebrews views these terms as literal or figurative designations for Jesus.

found in 6:19 where Jesus is the basis for hope, which is compared to an anchor. Metonymy is used in 1:8 in which “throne” and “scepter” are used figuratively of Jesus’ rule and authority. The terms “flesh” and “blood” are employed metonymically to refer to Jesus’ appropriation of human weakness in 2:14 and to his sacrificial death in 10:19–20. In 13:10 the “altar” is likely a metonymy for the cross or Jesus’ sacrificial death. In 3:3 the author employs an analogy indicating that Jesus has more glory than Moses as a builder of a house has more glory than the house. In 12:24 the author appears to use personification when he says that the blood of Jesus speaks better than Abel’s.

As noted in chapter two, the degree to which readers can or cannot identify with a character can be expressed by the terms: *empathy*, *sympathy*, *antipathy*, or *apathy*.³¹⁸ These concepts can find correlation with rhetorical theory in the persuasive strategy of *pathos*. Aristotle says that “emotions [πάθη] are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments.”³¹⁹ The orator may attempt to arouse in the audience such emotions as joy, sorrow, love, hate, anger, pity, fear, shame, benevolence, indignation, envy, and so forth, towards a particular person.³²⁰ Thus, in both narrative and rhetorical genres, the narrator or orator attempts to influence the audience to adopt a favorable or unfavorable opinion towards certain figures. This study will not deal extensively with the issue of pathos except as it touches upon the characterization of Jesus.

A reader’s identification with a character is influenced by the evaluative point of view of a work. The evaluative point of view is often shaped by the narrator of a story. In rhetorical speeches, naturally it is the orator who is the “narrator” of the story. It is the orator/narrator who dictates the presentation of the information and whose point of view dominates throughout the discourse. As with narrative genres, it is possible for an orator to convey the point of view of other persons through the presentation of their actions or speech. For example, Hebrews utilizes *prosopopoeia* or *ethopoeia* to present the evaluative point of view of both God and Jesus through their respective “speeches.”

³¹⁸ See page 79.

³¹⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.1.8 (Freese, LCL).

³²⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.5; 2.1.8. Aristotle gives a lengthy treatment of *pathos* in 2.2–2.11. *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 34 (1439b–1440b) mentions appeals to friendship, gratitude, and compassion in persuasion, and to envy, hatred, and anger in dissuasion. Quintilian discusses emotional appeals in *Institutio oratoria* 6.2 as one of the most important aspects of persuasion in the exordium and peroration.

One must also consider the point of view of the audience of speeches. In most speeches the orator anticipates the point of view of his audience and then tries to persuade the audience to adopt his point of view. In chapter five, it will be argued that the author of Hebrews does indeed try to persuade his audience to adopt his evaluative point of view of Jesus' character. The author's point of view about Jesus will have important implications for his argument.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS IN HEBREWS¹

In this chapter we will reconstruct the author's portrayal of the character of Jesus in the book of Hebrews. This reconstruction will be arranged according to the encomiastic topics that the author *does* use (he does not use all of them) to construct the character of Jesus. Other rhetorical devices such as amplification and synkrisis will be discussed at the appropriate places under each topic. The overarching question that will be asked is: what does a given title, action, speech etc. reveal about the character of Jesus? By way of summary, the chapter will conclude with a listing of Jesus' character traits that are portrayed in Hebrews.

NAMES

We begin with names because, as explained in chapter two, a name is the "locus of qualities"² or the "locus around which characterization actually takes place."³ A name may also be a means of revealing character. As Theon states, "it is pleasant sometimes to draw a topic of praise from names and homonyms and nicknames."⁴ The proper name "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς) is used ten times (2:9; 3:1; 4:14; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2, 24; 13:12, 20), the designation "Christ" (Χριστός) nine times (3:6, 14; 5:5; 6:1; 9:11, 14, 24, 28; 11:26), and "Jesus Christ" three times (10:10; 13:8, 21). Ἰησοῦς is the Greek translation for "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) which means "God saves."⁵ Although the author does not elaborate on the etymology of Jesus' name as he does with Melchizedek (7:2), his name is suggestive of the importance of his role in God's economy of salvation. Indeed, the author will make much of his role in the salvation of God's people throughout the book (1:3; 2:9–11, 14–18;

¹ Portions of this chapter appeared in an earlier version in my article: Brian C. Small, "The Use of Rhetorical *Topoi* in the Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews," *PRSt* 37 (2010): 53–69. That article has been substantially revised and expanded in this chapter.

² Chatman, *Story*, 131.

³ Docherty, *Reading*, 74.

⁴ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 111 (Kennedy). Aristotle also identifies "the meaning of names" as one of the topics for argumentation (*Rhetoric* 2.29).

⁵ See Matt 1:21.

5:9; 7:25; 9:12–14, 28; 10:10, 12, 14; 13:12). The designation Χριστός means “anointed one” and is the Greek equivalent of the Jewish term “Messiah” (מָשִׁיחַ). Both priests⁶ and kings⁷ were anointed in the OT.⁸ Although the designation can have titular status, the author ostensibly uses it merely as a proper name.⁹ Nevertheless, it is appropriate to inquire whether the designation of “Christ” hints at the author’s program of highlighting Jesus’ priestly (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:5–6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11–17, 21–28; 8:1–4; 9:11; 10:11–12, 21) and royal functions (1:3, 5, 8–9, 13; 5:5; 7:3, 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). In fact, the related verb χρίω “to anoint” appears in connection with Jesus’ royal status in 1:9.

The author does not appear to make any distinction between the designations “Jesus” and “Christ.” Both designations are used interchangeably without any apparent difference in meaning. In addition, there does not appear to be any distinguishable difference when both names are used together. The author refers to both the blood of Jesus (10:19; 12:24; 13:12, 20) and of Christ (9:12, 14). Both Jesus (3:1; 4:14; 6:20; cf. also 7:22 in context) and Christ (5:5; 9:11) are called high priest. The author indicates that both Jesus (4:14) and Christ (3:6; 5:5) are the Son of God. Both Jesus (4:14; 6:20) and Christ (9:11, 24) have entered into heaven. The earthly Jesus, who suffered and died, is coterminous with the exalted Jesus who now serves as high priest.

In addition to “high priest” and “Son of God,” the proper name “Jesus” also frequently appears in conjunction with other designations: apostle (3:1), forerunner (πρόδρομος; 6:20), guarantee (ἔγγυος) of a better covenant

⁶ Exod 28:41; 29:7, 21, 29; 30:30; 40:13, 15; Lev 6:20; 8:12; 10:7; 16:32; 21:10, 12; Num 35:25; 1 Chr 29:22. Priests were sometimes designated as “anointed priest(s)” (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:22; Num 3:3).

⁷ Judg 9:8, 15; 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 16:3, 12–13; 2 Sam 2:4, 7; 3:39; 5:3, 17; 12:7; 19:10; 1 Kgs 1:34, 39, 45; 5:1; 19:15–16; 2 Kgs 9:3, 6, 12; 11:12; 23:30; 1 Chr 11:3; 14:8; 29:22; 2 Chr 23:11; Ps 89:20. Kings were sometimes called the “LORD’s anointed” (1 Sam 16:6; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:21).

⁸ Prophets were sometimes anointed (1 Kgs 19:16). Anointing was also used to consecrate objects for holy service (Gen 31:13; Exod 29:36; 30:26; 40:9–11; Lev 8:10–11; Num 7:1, 10, 84, 88).

⁹ Brooke Foss Westcott distinguishes between the articular form which seems to retain “the idea of the office as the crown of the old Covenant,” while the anarthrous form is a proper name; see *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1903), 33. But this distinction can hardly be pressed; there hardly seems to be any difference in the meaning of Χριστός, for instance, between 9:24 and 9:28. MacNeill claims that the articular form refers to the preincarnate person (*Christology*, 64), but this is certainly wrong. The preincarnate Christ does not offer his blood (9:14), nor is he the one who will come a second time (9:28). It is possible that Χριστός is a title in 6:1 or 11:26 but this is by no means certain.

(7:22), the pioneer (ἀρχηγός) and perfecter (τελειωτής) of faith (12:2), the mediator (μεσίτης) of a new covenant (12:24), the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20), and Lord (13:20). The name “Jesus” thus becomes the “peg” upon which the author of Hebrews hangs the various roles and titles.¹⁰ It is clear that the author wants to praise Jesus’ character by designating the many roles and titles that he holds. We will consider all of these titles and roles later in the discussion.

NATURE

Divine

As noted in the previous chapter, for Cicero a person’s nature can be either divine or mortal.¹¹ The author of Hebrews, however, ascribes both divine and human aspects to Jesus’ nature.¹² Several passages address Jesus’ divine nature. In the opening prologue, the author uses two vivid metaphors to describe Jesus’ character. The author asserts that Jesus is the ἀπαύγασμα of God’s δόξα and the χαρακτήρ of God’s ὑπόστασις (1:3). All of these terms are difficult and in need of elaboration.

The first term, ἀπαύγασμα, can be construed actively, “radiance, effulgence,” or passively, “reflection.”¹³ A decision between the two alternatives

¹⁰ See Docherty, *Reading*, 43, quoting from Searle, “Proper Names,” 172.

¹¹ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35. See page 126.

¹² This statement does not imply that the author of Hebrews has fully worked out the interrelationship of these two natures as was the concern of later christological controversies. For studies that explore the role of Hebrews in these later christological controversies, see: Frances M. Young, “Christological Ideas in the Greek Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 150–63; and Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews* (BGBE 15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973).

¹³ Modern scholars are divided over which reading is preferable. Scholars supporting the active meaning include: James Macknight, *A New Literal Translation from the Original Greek, of All the Apostolical Epistles: With a Commentary, and Notes, Philological, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical, to Which Is Added, a History of the Life of the Apostle Paul* (vol. 5; Boston: W. Wells and T. B. Wait, 1810), 32; Archibald McLean, *A Paraphrase and Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2 vols; 2d ed.; London: W. Jones, Lovell’s-Court, Paternoster-Row, 1820), 15; Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (4th ed.; Andover, Mass.: Warren F. Draper, 1868), 269; John H. A. Ebrard, *Biblical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in Continuation of the Work of Olshausen* (trans. John Fulton; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1853), 20–21; Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 1:48; William Lindsay, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1867), 1:33; Frederic Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews in Greek and English with Critical and Explanatory Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 4–5; Milligan, *Theology*, 76; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 11; E. C. Wickham, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: With Introduction and Notes* (WC; London: Methuen, 1910), 3;

is difficult. It is tempting to read this word in an active sense in light of later christological developments.¹⁴ The Nicene Creed, for example, affirms that Jesus is “God from God, Light from Light”—a conception that clearly conveys “effulgence.” The earliest known usage of ἀπαύγασμα is found in Wis 7:26 where it speaks of wisdom as a “reflection [ἀπαύγασμα] of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” Here the word appears to take the passive sense. This meaning is by no means certain, however, in view of 7:25 which reads, “For [wisdom] is a breath [ἀτμίς] of the power of God, and a pure emanation [ἀπόρροια] of the glory [δόξα] of the Almighty.” If ἀτμίς means “breath” or “exhalation,”¹⁵ then this implies that wisdom somehow emanates from God. The rare word ἀπόρροια literally means an “effluence,” or a “flowing off” as a stream, possibly suggesting by analogy an active meaning

MacNeill, *Christology*, 59, 61; Joseph Bonsirven, *Saint Paul—Épître aux Hébreux: Introduction, traduction et commentaire* (VS 12; Paris: Beauchesne, 1943), 175–76; Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 52; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (1938; repr., Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 36; P. Teodorico, *L'Epistola agli Ebrei* (La Sacra Bibbia; Torino: Marietti, 1952), 45–46; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 42; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 48; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:69; August Strobel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (13th ed.; NTD 9/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 19; Herbert W. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5–13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (AUS.TR 193; New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 211; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 48; Martin Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (2 vols.; ÖTK 20; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2002–2008), 1:121; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 103; John Webster, “One Who Is Son: Theological Reflections on the Exordium to the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 85–86; and O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 54; Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 94. Scholars opting for the passive meaning include: Carl Bernhard Moll, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. A. C. Kendrick; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1868), 26; A. C. Kendrick, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (American Commentary on the NT; Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889), 18; Ménégos, *Théologie*, 78–79; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 11; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 6; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:7; Héring, *Hébreux*, 22; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 34–35; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 36; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 145; and deSilva, *Perseverance*, 88. The question is left unresolved by Michel, *Hebräer*, 98–99; Herbert Braun, *An die Hebräer* (HNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1984), 25; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 42; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (3 vols.; EKKNT 17; Zürich: Benziger, 1990–1997), 1:61; Koester, *Hebrews*, 120; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 69; Knut Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 85.

¹⁴ The early church fathers overwhelmingly support the active meaning (“ἀπαύγασμα,” BAGD, 82; G. Kittel, “ἀυγάζω, ἀπαύγασμα,” *TDNT* 1:508). Westcott gives quotations from Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Oecumenius (*Hebrews*, 11). Hughes cites Athanasius and Ambrose (*Hebrews*, 42–43).

¹⁵ David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 43; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 184–85.

for ἀπαύγασμα in verse 26.¹⁶ It is even more striking that ἀπόρροια is used in combination with δόξα, thus resonating with the language of Heb 1:3. Nevertheless, the parallelism with “mirror” (ἔσπετρον) and “image” (εἰκόν) in verse 26 seems to favor a passive meaning. Its usage in other first-century writings (Philo and Plutarch) brings us no closer to a solution to the problem.¹⁷ If ἀπαύγασμα is synonymous with χαρακτήρ, then the passive meaning seems warranted. But the terms may be complementary to one another. In either case, as Otfried Hofius explains, both “predicates characterize the Son as the perfect image of God.”¹⁸

In the LXX δόξα was commonly used to translate the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד, which Harald Hegermann says “refers to the weight of esteem and honor which a person . . . has.”¹⁹ The connotation of “honor” is certainly in view in Heb 3:3. Moreover, people were often enjoined to give glory to God, or prayed (a doxology) that God might receive glory; God was to receive the honor and esteem due to him.²⁰ This connotation may be reflected in Heb 13:21.²¹ Sverre Aalen remarks that when δόξα “is used of God, it does not

¹⁶ Winston translates ἀπαύγασμα as “effulgence” in his commentary (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 184, 186–87).

¹⁷ In Philo, *Spec.* 4.123 ἀπαύγασμα is paralleled with the “breath of God” which is breathed into humanity; this suggests an emanation or an active sense of the word. In *Plant.* 50 ἀπαύγασμα is correlated with μίμημα, or “imitation,” suggesting the passive meaning. The meaning of ἀπαύγασμα in *Opif.* 146 cannot be decisively determined either way; its parallel terms are ἐκμαγείον, “impression,” and ἀπόσπασμα, “fragment.” In Plutarch, *Fac. Lun.* 21 the passive meaning seems to be warranted.

¹⁸ O. Hofius, “ἀπαύγασμα,” *EDNT* 1:118. The active meaning is favored by R. P. Martin, “ἀπαύγασμα,” *NIDNTT* 2:290 and G. Kittel, “ἀυγάζω, ἀπαύγασμα,” *TDNT* 1:508.

¹⁹ H. Hegermann, “δόξα,” *EDNT* 1:345.

²⁰ Josh 7:19; 1 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 16:28–29; Pss 28:1–2 LXX; 65:2 LXX; 71:19 LXX; 95:7 LXX; 103:31 LXX; 107:6 LXX; Isa 42:12; Jer 13:16; Luke 2:14; 17:18; 19:38; Rom 11:36; 16:27; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; 1 Pet 4:11; 2 Pet 3:8; Rev 1:6.

²¹ The antecedent of ᾧ may refer to (1) “Jesus Christ,” which immediately precedes the relative pronoun; see Riehm, *Lehrbegriff*, 286; Bernhard Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (trans. James E. Duguid; vol. 2; Clark’s Foreign Theological Library NS 13; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), 184; R. P. Médebielle, “Épître aux Hébreux,” in *Épîtres aux Thessaloniens, Épîtres Pastorales, Épître à Philémon, Épître aux Hébreux, Épîtres Catholiques, Apocalypse* (vol. 12 of *La Sainte Bible: Texte Latin et traduction française d’après les textes originaux avec un commentaire exégétique et théologique*; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1946), 371; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:437; Filson, *Yesterday*, 43, 60; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 407; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:235; or (2) “God” who is the subject of the sentence in 13:20; see Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:402n1; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 145; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 451; Eduard Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KNT 14; Leipzig: Deichert, 1913), 451; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 121; Otto Kuss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (2d ed.; NTD 8; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1953), 222; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 252; Braun, *Hebräer*, 480; R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 251; Harald Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (HKNT 16; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 284; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 389; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:565; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 731; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 513; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 537; David L. Allen, *Hebrews* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 628. Michel says

mean God in his essential nature, but the luminous manifestation of his person, his glorious manifestation of himself.”²² Hence, visual language was often used in conjunction with δόξα and often indicated the presence of God.²³ Johnson nicely defines δόξα as the “visible presence of God among the people.”²⁴ Words within the same semantic domain might include “splendor,” “grandeur,” or “brilliance.” The term δόξα might also connote God’s power or his majesty.²⁵ For the author of Hebrews, then, Jesus is the visual manifestation of God’s glory, with all that it entails. Later, the author indicates that Jesus is “crowned with glory and honor” (2:9).

The visual imagery is also captured in the second metaphor, χαρακτήρ. We already explored the history of the term in chapter two.²⁶ Héring explicates the meaning of χαρακτήρ in 1:3 as follows: “Le sens du mot χαρακτήρ n’a naturellement rien à voir ici avec la signification psychologique du mot ‘caractère’ dans les langues modernes. Ce terme désigne une *empreinte* qui reproduit fidèlement l’original.”²⁷ χαρακτήρ is an imprint, image, or impression, like the stamp on a coin or the impression of a seal on wax. An interesting usage can be found in 4 Macc 15:4: “We impress upon the character [χαρακτήρα] of a small child a wondrous likeness both of mind and of form.” DeSilva comments that the “child’s character is thus largely a reflection of the parents’ character, which impresses itself upon the former like a seal in warm wax.”²⁸

The noun ὑπόστασις has numerous meanings which we will not be able to explore here. Its literal meaning connotes something that “stands

that a firm decision between the two is not possible (*Hebräer*, 541); see also Leon Morris, “Hebrews,” in *Hebrews-Revelation* (vol. 12 of *EBC*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 156; Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1983), 279; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 432; Koester, *Hebrews*, 574; Edgar V. McKnight, “Hebrews,” in *Hebrews-James* (SHBC; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2004), 316; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 356; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 308).

²² Sverre Aalen, “δόξα,” *NIDNTT* 2:45.

²³ Exod 16:7, 10; 24:16–17; 33:18, 22; 40:34–35; Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:10, 21–22; 16:19; 17:7 LXX; 20:6; Deut 5:24; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3; Pss 96:6 LXX; 102:17 LXX; Isa 35:2; 40:5; 60:1–2; 66:18–19; Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23; 43:2, 4–5; 44:4. The NT picks up on the visual language: Luke 2:9; 9:32; John 1:14; 12:41; 17:24; Acts 7:2, 55; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet 4:13; Rev 15:8; 18:1; 21:23.

²⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 69.

²⁵ *Power*: Num 14:22; 2 Chr 7:1–3; Pss 18:2 LXX; 23:8 LXX; 28:3 LXX; 62:3 LXX; 95:3, 7 LXX; 144:11–12 LXX; Isa 58:8; Matt 6:13; 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; John 2:11; 11:40; Phil 4:19; Col 1:27. *Majesty*: Pss 56:6, 12 LXX; 112:4 LXX; Isa 6:3; 24:23; Jer 17:12; 31:18 LXX; Ezek 39:21; Matt 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 10:37; Luke 9:26; 24:26; John 17:5, 22; 2 Thess 1:9.

²⁶ See page 97.

²⁷ Héring, *Hébreux*, 22 (italics his).

²⁸ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 89.

under,” for example, a support or basis for something. Its more figurative meaning connotes the underlying reality of something, its substantial nature, substance, essence, or actual being.²⁹ The expression *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, then, underscores the similarity of God and Jesus in terms of their substance, essence, or being. The two expressions of 1:3 appear to be parallel to one another. Ulrich Wilckins explains that just as “δόξα...and ὑπόστασις...are synonymous to the degree that God’s glory is His nature, so the same function of the Son is expressed by ἀπαύγασμα...and χαρακτήρ. Since God’s glory has impressed itself on Him as the One exalted by God, He is its reflection and image.”³⁰ As Johnson notes, the terms together “clearly and overwhelmingly assert the divine status of the Son.”³¹ Scholars have noted that the two expressions together imply: (1) divine origin, (2) independent existence, and (3) resemblance to God.³²

Echoes with Wis 7:25–26 have prompted scholars to suggest that Hebrews borrowed its imagery from the wisdom tradition.³³ Lane remarks that

as a hellenistic Jew, the writer was thoroughly familiar with the teaching concerning the Wisdom of God now preserved in the OT and in such later documents as the Wisdom of Solomon. Reflection on the Wisdom of God in Alexandrian theology provided him with categories and vocabulary with which to interpret the person and work of Christ.³⁴

²⁹ G. Harder, “ὑπόστασις,” *NIDNTT* 1:710.

³⁰ Ulrich Wilckins, “χαρακτήρ,” *TDNT* 9:421. Bénétreau claims that the first statement underscores the continuity between God and the Son, while the second emphasizes the distinction (*Hébreux*, 170).

³¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 68–69.

³² Riehm, *Lehrbegriff*, 282–83; Moll, *Hebrews*, 26; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 18; Ménégos, *Théologie*, 78–79; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:7; Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Épître aux Hébreux 1 et 2* (LD 58; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 73. Joseph Bonsirven goes so far as to assert that “Si nous joignons les deux métaphores, nous avons l’essentiel du dogme Trinitaire: le Fils, consubstantiel au Père, lui est, dans sa nature, identique et égal, il est par là comme une réplique du Père, mais il reste distinct de lui en tant que personne” (*Hébreux*, 177).

³³ E.g., MacNeill, *Christology*, 60; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 96–97; François Bovon, “Le Christ, la foi et la sagesse dans l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *RTP* 18 (1968): 139–42; Williamson, *Philo*, 410; R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament* (SNTSMS 21; Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 243; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 42; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 47; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 186–98; C. K. Barrett, “The Christology of Hebrews,” in *On Paul: Aspects of His Life, Work and Influence in the Early Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 199; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 87–88; Koester, *Hebrews*, 187–88; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 102; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 15–16; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 33–34.

³⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:12.

F. F. Bruce even suggests that the author identifies “Christ with the wisdom of God.”³⁵ Some scholars urge caution, however. Ellingworth contends that “Despite allusions to Wis. 7, Hebrews does not identify Christ with wisdom . . . and indeed avoids the term σοφία. The author’s use of Wis. 7 and similar passages such as Pr. 8:22–31 is an implicit reapplication to Christ of what had been written of the divine wisdom.”³⁶ While the author appropriates wisdom language, he also transforms it and transcends it. The author makes claims about Jesus that are not said about Wisdom: Jesus took on human flesh and was crucified to atone for sins.³⁷

In the catena of Scripture quotations which follows (1:5–13), the author reinforces his assertion about Jesus’ divinity. The quotations are used to develop a synkrisis between Jesus and the angels. As already noted, the quotations are a form of prosopopoeia or ethopoeia; they are attributed to God as if God had spoken the Scripture passages himself. The quotations additionally serve as divine testimony to Jesus’ character. God is a reliable witness, so so we can trust whatever God says about Jesus’ character.

In 1:8–9 Jesus is exclaimed as “God” (θεός) by using a quotation from Ps 44:7–8 LXX.³⁸ The psalm is an epithalamium, a royal wedding song,

³⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 47; cf. Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 15.

³⁶ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 99.

³⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 188; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 53–54. Daniel Ebert denies any connection with the wisdom tradition; see “Wisdom in New Testament Christology with Special Reference to Hebrews 1:1–4” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998), 110–11, 310.

³⁸ The meaning of this verse has been disputed. There are three possible ways to take the nominative: (1) as a subject nominative: “God is your throne”; (2) as a predicate nominative: “Your throne is God”; (3) as a nominative functioning as a vocative; see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 56; and BDF §147. Scholars who favor one of the first two options argue that the ancient Israelite king would never be addressed as “God”; see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 25–26; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 8; Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, 306; Kenneth J. Thomas, “The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews,” *NTS* 11 (1965): 305; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 49. However, the overwhelming majority of scholars take θεός to be a vocative; see e.g., Raymond Brown, “Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?” *TS* 26 (1965): 562–63; Murray J. Harris, “The Translation and Significance of ‘Ο ΘΕΟΣ in Hebrews 1:8–9,” *TynBul* 36 (1985): 138–48; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 24–40; Herbert W. Bateman, “Psalm 45:6–7 and Its Christological Contributions to Hebrews,” *TJ* 22 (2001): 10–11. Hughes opines that the former options “would be an awkward and uncharacteristic mode of expression” (*Hebrews*, 64). Meier agrees: “it is difficult to understand what it would mean to our author to say that God (the Father) is the eternal throne *on which* the Son sits” (“Symmetry,” 514; italics his). God is never described as a throne in the OT (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 122). Likewise, in verse 9 the phrase ὁ θεός ὁ θεός σου can be construed in one of two ways: (1) ὁ θεός is the subject of ἔχρισεν, while ὁ θεός σου is in apposition; (2) ὁ θεός functions as a vocative, while ὁ θεός σου is the subject of the verb. Either way makes good sense. Scholars favoring the former option include: Rendall, *Hebrews*, 10; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 41; Fred B. Craddock, “The Letter to

sung on the occasion of the king's marriage.³⁹ After a brief introduction, the king is praised in verses 3–10, followed by an address and praise of the bride in verses 11–18. The king is addressed as “God” (ὁ θεός; MT: אֱלֹהִים) in verse 7 (and possibly in verse 8). It is unlikely that the psalmist viewed the king as divine, but as the divine representative, chosen by God, among his people.⁴⁰ The king appears to be subordinated to God at the end of verse 8. So, in the original context, it is the psalmist who addresses the king as God, but the author of Hebrews has transferred the meaning to become an address of God to his Son.

Hebrews 1:8 also declares that Jesus' throne is “forever and ever,” thus suggesting permanence and everlastingness. These qualities are in direct contrast to the mutable and ephemeral nature of the angels.⁴¹ In 1:7 the quotation is taken from Ps 103:4 LXX. The psalm is a nature hymn in praise of God's creation.⁴² In verse 4 of the MT, the psalmist exclaims that wind and fire are God's messengers and servants. The LXX translation, however, seems to reverse the words from the MT, declaring that God makes his

the Hebrews: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude, Revelation* (vol. 12 of *NIB*; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 30. Those preferring the second option include: E. Guers, *Étude sur l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Geneva: Émile Beroud, 1862), 48; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 47; Morris, “Hebrews,” 19; Braun, *Hebräer*, 40; Harris, “Translation,” 150; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 54; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 59–60; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 60; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:84; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 124; Koester, *Hebrews*, 195; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 80; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 98; J. Ramsey Michaels, “Hebrews,” in 1 *Timothy*, 2 *Timothy*, *Titus*, *Hebrews* (vol. 17 of *CsBC*; Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2009), 334; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 74. The second option seems best here.

³⁹ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 360–65; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (2 vols. NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 1:346–54; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms* (TOTC 14a; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 170–74; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 450–57; Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC 19; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 335–41; James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 180–82; J. Clinton McCann, “The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in 1 & 2 *Maccabees*, *Introduction to Hebrew Poetry*, *Job*, *Psalms* (vol. 4 of *NIB*; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 859–63; James Limburg, *Psalms* (WeBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 149–52; Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms* (BerO; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001): 114–15; Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 362–66.

⁴⁰ Weiser, *Psalms*, 363; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 457; Mays, *Psalms*, 181; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 76. Spicq explains that “Le vocative θεός . . . est donné parfois métaphoriquement aux chefs et aux rois (Ps. LXXXII, 1,6), conformément à l'usage protocolaire oriental qui attribue hyperboliquement aux monarques une origine céleste” (*Hébreux*, 2:19).

⁴¹ As indicated by the μὲν . . . δέ construction of 1:7–8.

⁴² Weiser, *Psalms*, 666; Anderson, *Psalms*, 717; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993), 298.

angels and servants take on the form of winds and fire.⁴³ The author of Hebrews, of course, picks up on the LXX translation. The quotation suggests that the angels have servant roles in contrast to the Son who is the sovereign king. The servant status of the angels is reemphasized in 1:14. Not only is the servant status of the angels contrasted with Jesus' kingship, but their fleeting nature—likened to wind and flame—appears to be contrasted with the permanence of Jesus' reign. It is also possible that ποιῶν hints that the angels are created beings, while Jesus is begotten (1:5).⁴⁴ Joy Tetley notes that ποιεῖν is a verb of creation.⁴⁵ It is also possible that it is the Son, not the Father, who created the angels.⁴⁶

Similarly, Ps 101:26–28 LXX, which originally was addressed to God, is also reapplied to Jesus in 1:10–12. The psalm begins as an individual lament in verses 2–12, but radically changes in verses 13–23 to become a hymn of praise and an expression of hope for the restoration of Zion. In verse 24 the psalm reverts to a lament. The psalmist is suffering and apparently is terminally ill. His life is coming to an end and so he is reminded of his own mortality compared to the eternity of God (vv. 26–28). Even the heavens and the earth are ephemeral compared to God. The pair of similes in verse 27 likens them to garments that wear out and can be changed. By contrast God remains the same; his years will not come to an end (v. 28). While in the original context, it is the psalmist who addresses God, the author of Hebrews places the psalm in the mouth of God who is speaking to his Son. The author rearranges the sentence, placing the pronoun σὺ in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence. Allen suggests that its position at the front underscores Jesus' preexistence.⁴⁷ Thus, the eternity that is ascribed to God is also ascribed to Jesus.

⁴³ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: A Commentary on Books III–V of the Psalms* (TOTC 14b; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 369; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 57–58; Koester, *Hebrews*, 194. Cf. 4 Ezra 8:21–22 which states that at God's command angels "are changed to wind and fire."

⁴⁴ Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 57; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 46; James W. Thompson, "The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb 1:5–13," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 357; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 75.

⁴⁵ Gen 1:1, 7, 16, 21, 25–27, 31; 2:2; Exod 20:11; Pss 103:24 LXX; 145:6 LXX; Matt 19:4; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24, 26; Heb 1:2; Rev 21:5; see Joy Tetley, "The Priesthood of Christ as the Controlling Theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 1987), 125. Westcott says, "The Greek Fathers lay stress on the word as marking the angels as created beings in contrast with the Son" (*Hebrews*, 25).

⁴⁶ Meier, "Symmetry," 512; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 226–27; James Swetnam, "Hebrews 1, 54–14 [sic]: A New Look," *MelT* 51 (2000): 60; Anderson, *King-Priest*, 155; Sean M. McDonough, "In the beginning, Lord . . . : The Contribution of Hebrews," in *Christ as Creator: Origins of a New Testament Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 204–5.

⁴⁷ Allen, *Hebrews*, 183.

Other passages also point to Jesus' eternity. In chapter 7 Jesus is likened to Melchizedek, whom we are told had "neither beginning of days nor end of life"; instead, he has a priesthood which is perpetual (7:3).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Scholars are divided over whether the author of Hebrews was influenced by contemporary speculation about Melchizedek, regarding him as a type of supra-human or heavenly being or whether he was simply basing his argument on the scriptural passage by employing the rabbinic technique of the argument from silence, *quod non in thora est non in mundo*, "what is not in the Torah is not in the world." Scholars who prefer the first option include, Gottfried Wuttke, *Melchisedech der Priesterkönig von Salem: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Exegese* (BZNW 5; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1927), 11–13; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 61–63; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 209; Michel, *Hebräer*, 262–63; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1966): 321–23; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 256; Dey, *Intermediary World*, 187–91, 209–11; James W. Thompson, "The Conceptual Background and Purpose of the Midrash in Hebrews VII," *NovT* 19 (1977): 211–14; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews: A Study in the Development and Circumstantial Expression of New Testament Thought," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 177; Loader, *Sohn*, 214–15; Paul J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša* (CBQMS 10; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 119, 126; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 191–92; Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus: 11QMelchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origin of the Worship of Jesus* (eds. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis; JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 138–39; Kurianal, *Jesus*, 190; Kiwoong Son, *Zion Symbolism in Hebrews: Hebrews 12:18–24 as a Hermeneutical Key to the Epistle* (PBM; Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 158, 160; Mason, "Melchizedek," 61–62; idem, *Priest Forever*, 32–33, 201–3; Michaels, "Hebrews," 383–84; David McCheyne Moffitt, "A New and Living Way: Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2010), 268–72; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 63–68. Scholars who prefer the second option include, Bernhard Weiss, *Kritisch exegetisches Handbuch über den Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888), 171–72; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 174, 201; Milligan, *Theology*, 112; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 185; Meeter, *Heavenly High Priesthood*, 64; Kuss, *Hebräer*, 87; Str-B 3:694; Sowers, *Hermeneutics of Philo*, 124n93, 126; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," in *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 236; Williamson, *Philo*, 444; Jean Carmignac, "Le document de Qumran sur Melkisédeq," *RevQ* 7 (1970): 372–73; Leopold Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (SHR 25. Leiden: Brill, 1973), 183; Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1–10 from the Reformation to the Present* (BGBE 19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1976), 131; Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources of the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 30; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 155–56, 164, 169; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106; Paul Ellingworth, "Like the Son of God: Form and Content in Hebrews 7,1–10," *Bib* 64 (1983): 238; Tetley, "Priesthood," 40; Parsons, "Son and High Priest," 213; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 159–60; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:31; Hurst, *Hebrews*, 55; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:165–66; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 163–64, 176; Theo de Kruijf, "The Priest-King of Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen 14,18–20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110," *Bijdr* 54 (1993): 402–3; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 208–9, 224; Gareth Lee Cockerill, "Melchizedek without Speculation: Hebrews 7,1–25 and Genesis 14,17–24," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 132; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 248–49; Allen, *Hebrews*, 413. Käsemann is representative of the first group: "First, it

Furthermore, the author notes that Jesus has an “indestructible life” (ζωῆς ἀκατάλυτου; 7:16). The adjective ἀκατάλυτος is in contrast to the implied corruptibility of the Levitical priests who obtain their offices via a “fleshly” (σαρκίνης) commandment. The author does not explain what he means by an “indestructible life.” On the one hand, it could refer to a quality inherent to Jesus’ divine nature.⁴⁹ On the other hand, it could

*is conceded that the predicate assigned Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:2ff. can no more be derived from Genesis 14 than from Psalm 110. One resorts to construing them as argumenta e silentio. And since the Old Testament contains no data regarding the person and lineage, birth and death of Melchizedek, according to rabbinic scripture exposition the inference can in fact be drawn that Melchizedek is an eternal and heavenly creature” (Wandering, 209; italics his). De Jonge and van der Woude also take the literal view: “It seems much easier to assume that the author really meant what he wrote. On the evidence of 11QMelch the most plausible inference is that he regarded Melchizedek as an (arch-)angel, who appeared to Abraham long ago” (“11QMelchizedek,” 321). The latter, typological view is represented by Demarest who argues that if the author conceived Melchizedek as a supernatural being, his priesthood would rival that of Jesus: “If the statements are interpreted in a strictly literal sense, Melchizedek would appear as a supra-human figure whose priesthood would encroach upon the eternal priesthood of Christ” (History, 9). Ellingworth contends that “Attempts to assimilate Melchizedek in Hebrews to the angelic figure of 11QMelch create more problems than they solve; if the author of Hebrews had thought of Melchizedek in this way, it would have been necessary for him either to contrast Melchizedek with Christ, or destroy the whole argument of chapter 1” (“Like the Son,” 238). John McCullough adds additional arguments for the latter view: “there is absolutely no evidence that the author of Hebrews was aware of [a tradition about Melchizedek as a heavenly redeemer-figure or angelic being]; on the contrary, some of the arguments in the epistle in connection with Melchizedek and Jesus would be weakened or destroyed if Melchizedek were anything other than an historical person, albeit a rather special one. We mention two points in particular. As an historical person the author has to prove that he was superior to Abraham; if on the other hand he had been an angel no such proof would have been necessary. Secondly, as an historical person he is a good prototype for Jesus the high priest whose perfection rests on his humanity (Hb. 5:1ff.) as much as his superiority to Aaron; if Melchizedek had been considered to be an angel then his suitability as a prototype for Jesus as priest would have been greatly reduced”; see “Melchizedek’s Varied Role in Early Exegetical Tradition,” *NESTTR* 1 (1978): 56. A. Welch argues that Melchizedek was Christ himself; see *The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews and Other Papers* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1898), 78–86. This view was taken up by A. T. Hanson who claims that the author viewed Melchizedek as the pre-incarnate Christ; see “Christ in the Old Testament according to Hebrews,” in *Studia evangelica vol. II: Papers Presented to the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1961* (ed. F. L. Cross; TUGAL 87; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 400–401. The problem with Hanson’s view is that the participle ἀφωμοιωμένος suggests Melchizedek is subordinated to Jesus, ruling out any identity between the two (see Aschim, Melchizedek,” 138).*

⁴⁹ See Riehman, *Lehrbegriff*, 457; B. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 183; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 187; Milligan, *Theology*, 122; Geerhardus Vos, “The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *PTR* 5 (1907): 594; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:193; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 125–26; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, “The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews. Part II: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ,” *BSac* 130 (1973): 208; Cockerill, “Melchizedek Christology,” 111; Buist M. Fanning, “A Theology of Hebrews,” in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 376; David J. MacLeod, “The Present Work of Christ

refer to the quality of life he received at the event of his resurrection and exaltation.⁵⁰ A decision between the two is difficult since either option would fit well within the author's theology. On the one hand, Jesus did in fact die, so that it would make good sense to affirm that he did not receive an indestructible life until after his exaltation. On the other hand, other declarations about Jesus' divinity and eternality seem to tip the scale in favor of seeing it as a reference to his eternal nature. Under this reading, then, the description of Jesus' life as "indestructible" would not imply that he did not die a physical death, but that it indicates that he continues to exist even after death.⁵¹ Vos tersely explains that Jesus' life was indestructible "precisely for this reason that it could not be dissolved by death."⁵² His indestructible life allows him to abide as a priest forever (εις τὸν αἰῶνα); his priesthood remains permanent or unchangeable (ἀπαράβατον; 7:24).⁵³

Finally, in 13:8 the author notes that Jesus remains the same in the past, present, and future. This statement affirms more directly Jesus' immutability, but it also suggests his eternality and divinity.⁵⁴ While the statement

in Hebrews," *BSac* 148 (1991): 197; McKnight, "Hebrews," 168–69; Cockerill, "Melchizedek without Speculation," 131; Richard Bauckham, "The Divinity of Jesus in the Letter of the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 31.

⁵⁰ See Hay, *Glory*, 146; Thompson, "Conceptual Background," 218; Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 118; Peterson, *Perfection*, 110–11; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 163; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 196; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 169; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Hebrews* (2d ed.; NIBC 14; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 112; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1184; Lindars, *Theology*, 78; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 153; Deborah W. Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7," *Bib* 81 (2000): 91; Koester, *Hebrews*, 355; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 188; Karrer, *Hebräer*, 2:84; Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: The Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1–10:18* (PBM; Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008); David McCheyne Moffitt, "If Another Priest Arises: Jesus' Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 78; Allen, *Hebrews*, 424; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 264; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 214.

⁵¹ Westcott explains it thus: "The Life of Christ was not endless or eternal only. It was essentially 'indissoluble' (ἀκατάλυτος). Although the form of its manifestation was changed and in the earthly sense He died, yet His life endured unchanged even through earthly dissolution" (*Hebrews*, 187).

⁵² Vos, "Priesthood," 594.

⁵³ The adjective ἀπαράβατος means "unalterable, infallible; inviolable; permanent, perpetual" (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 178). Some interpreters take the meaning to be "untransferable, intransmissible" or "without succession" (Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 99; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 340n1; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:197; Héring, *Hébreux*, 72; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 128), but according to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 210), this meaning is not attested in ancient sources; see also Paul Ellingworth, "Just Like Melchizedek," *BT* 28 (1977): 238–39; and "The Unshakable Priesthood: Hebrews 7.24," *JSNT* 23 (1985): 125–26. Nevertheless, it stands to reason that if Jesus' high priesthood is permanent, it will never be transferred to another.

⁵⁴ Hagner, *Hebrews*, 241; Koester, *Hebrews*, 567; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 346; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 359. Bauckham contends that threefold formulas ascribing eternality to deities

seems to be divorced from its context, upon closer inspection there appears to be an implicit synkrisis with the past leaders of the community who spoke the word of God to the audience but now are no longer with them (13:7). There may also be a contrast with the verse that follows (13:9), which speaks about diverse and strange teachings. Jesus' "sameness" implies his constancy, reliability, and faithfulness for the audience in the midst of their instability.

One highly disputed passage that may point to Jesus' divinity is found in 9:14 where the author of Hebrews says that Jesus offered himself to God διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου (literally, "through eternal spirit").⁵⁵ The interpretation of this phrase falls under two general headings:⁵⁶ (1) it refers to the Holy Spirit;⁵⁷ Jesus accomplished his salvific ministry through the

were quite widespread in ancient Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian literature. He adduces a few examples in "Divinity," 34.

⁵⁵ A history of interpretation of this passage can be found in John J. McGrath's dissertation, *Through the Eternal Spirit: An Historical Study of the Exegesis of Hebrews 9:13–14* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1961). An overview of differing views on this passage can also be found in Martin Emmrich, *Pneumatological Concepts in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Amtscharisma, Prophet, & Guide of the Eschatological Exodus* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003), 1–13.

⁵⁶ Some minority views: (1) at death Jesus' spirit was separated from his body. Jesus presented the sacrificial blood in the heavenly realm by means of his spirit (διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου). Spirit and body were reunited at the resurrection; see Joachim Jeremias, "Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern: Descensus und Ascensus in der Karfreitagstheologie des Neuen Testaments," *ZNW* 42 (1949): 201; Hofius, *Katapausis*, 181n359; (2) The presentation of the blood took place in the spiritual realm. Grässer claims, "Jesu Selbstopfer vollzog sich nicht im Bereich der σὰρξ sondern des πνεύμα, es hat himmlischen, nicht irdischen Charakter" (Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:159); see also William George Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1973), 303; Robert H. Smith, *Hebrews* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 112; Kenneth L. Schenck, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years," *SPhA* 14 (2002): 121n46; Karrer, *Hebräer*, 2:157. This interpretation takes διὰ spatially, rather than modally. For a critique of these views and others, see Martin Emmrich, "Amtscharisma: Through the Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14)," *BBR* 12 (2002): 17–25.

⁵⁷ A. Tholuck, *Kommentar zum Briefe an die Hebräer* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1836), 312–14; Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 2:38; C. J. Vaughan, *ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ: The Epistle to the Hebrews with Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1891), 172; Hermann Strathmann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (10th ed.; NTD 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 123; McGrath, *Eternal Spirit*, 90–103; Michel, *Hebräer*, 314; Jean Galot, "Le sacrifice rédempteur du Christ selon l'Épître aux Hébreux," *EsprVie* 89 (1979): 376; Peterson, *Perfection*, 138; Robert H. Culpepper, "The High Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *TTE* 32 (1985): 52; Morris, "Hebrews," 86–87; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 251–52; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 155–56; Tetley, "Priesthood," 239; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 180; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 217; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 137, 140; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:240; Lindars, *Theology*, 57–58; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 457; Albert Vanhoye, "L'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Les dernières épîtres: Hébreux—Jacques—Pierre—Jean—Jude* (Paris: Bayard Éditions, 1997), 66; Koester, *Hebrews*, 410–11; Emmrich, *Pneumatological Concepts*, 12–13; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 270; Joslin, *Law*, 233n41; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*,

power of the Spirit; (2) it refers to Jesus' own spirit. Many commentators favoring this second option make a further distinction. On the one hand, it may have a *metaphysical* connotation, referring to Jesus' eternal and/or divine nature.⁵⁸ This expression would then correspond to statements about Jesus' indestructible life (7:16, 24). This interpretation emphasizes the infinite value of the sacrifice made and the permanent efficacy of his sacrifice. On the other hand, it may have an *ethical* connotation, referring to the spirit of Jesus proper, that is, his disposition, his self-determination, and/or his power of decision.⁵⁹ This interpretation emphasizes the voluntary and beneficent nature of Jesus' self-offering. This would contrast well with the involuntary nature of animal sacrifices. This latter interpretation founders on the adjective αἰωνίου, which would be an unusual way of describing Jesus' disposition or will.

The expression διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου is unusual, making a decision between the various options very difficult. Those that favor reading it as the Holy Spirit argue that if the author intended it to refer to the spirit of Jesus, he would have used a personal pronoun, "his." On the other hand, neither the definite article nor the adjective "holy" (ἅγιος) is used.⁶⁰ On the whole, it seems better to view the expression as referring to the Holy

323; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 324; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 398. Some interpreters who hold this view see *Servant of the Lord* imagery present in the passage, pointing particularly to Isa 42:1.

⁵⁸ Francis S. Sampson, *A Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. Robert L. Dabney; New York: Robert Carter, 1856), 338; John Brown, *Hebrews* (Geneva Series Commentary; 1862; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), 402; A. B. Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: With Introduction and Notes* (Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), 178; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 263–64; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 124; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 298–99; George Stoeckhardt, "The Sacerdotal Office of Christ according to the Letter to the Hebrews," *CTM* 21 (1950): 491–92; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:258–59; Héring, *Hébreux*, 86; Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspective* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Grail Publications, 1960), 103; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 154–55; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 358–59; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 251.

⁵⁹ Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 289; Gottlieb Lünemann, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. Maurice J. Evans; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 614; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:96; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 79; Samuel T. Lowrie, *An Explanation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Robert Carter, 1884), 304; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 117–18; George Barker Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament* (ITL; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 508; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 265; Vos, "Priesthood," 591; MacNeill, *Christology*, 47; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 391; G. J. C. Marchant, "Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *EvQ* 20 (1948): 207; Neil R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 171–72; Braun, *Hebräer*, 269; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:82; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 109; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 238; Meeter, *Heavenly High Priesthood*, 134–35.

⁶⁰ Some ancient manuscripts read ἁγίου instead of αἰωνίου (N² D* P 81 101 326 365 629 630 2464 *al* a vg sa^{ms} bo), but the external evidence overwhelmingly supports αἰωνίου, and it is the more difficult reading.

Spirit. The author does not use the definite article in two obvious references to the Holy Spirit (2:4; 6:4), and in 10:29 he does not use the adjective “holy” in another obvious reference. Hence, this verse is not a direct affirmation of the divinity of Jesus.

Human

Along with Jesus’ divine nature, the human nature of Jesus is underscored. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was made “for a little while” lower than the angels (2:9). This lower status was only temporary as he would eventually be “crowned with glory and honor” (2:9). Jesus partook of flesh and blood (2:14). The author describes Jesus’ earthly life as “the days of his flesh” (5:7) and it is by means of his flesh that he opens up “a new and living way” (10:20).⁶¹ The author also mentions that Jesus had a body prepared for him (10:5), so that he could offer it up as a sacrifice (10:10). There are also numerous references to Jesus’ blood (9:12, 14; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 20) that he shed on behalf of humanity.

Jesus experienced many of the same things as other humans and thus is able to sympathize with their weaknesses (4:15): Jesus experienced temptation (2:18; 4:15), suffering (2:9–10, 18; 5:8; 9:26; 13:12), and death (2:9, 14; 5:7). The metaphor “taste death” (2:9) means that Jesus experienced the bitterness of death in its fullness.⁶² The paradox is that, although he tasted death, he continues to live (7:8, 25). One of the subdivisions of human nature that Cicero mentions is that of age.⁶³ While the author never mentions the age of Jesus, he does mention both his mortality and eternity.

The author has constructed a synkrisis between Jesus’ nature and the nature of angels. While the contrast between Jesus’ divine nature and the nature of angels is made explicit in chapter 1, the contrast of Jesus’ human nature is more implicit in chapter 2. Jesus is not only superior to the angels by virtue of his divine nature, but he is also superior to the angels because

⁶¹ Koester remarks that the “mention of ‘flesh’ [in 10:20] is an instance of metonymy that calls Jesus’ suffering to mind” (*Hebrews*, 448).

⁶² To *taste* something does not mean to experience only a little bit of something, but to experience something in its fullness. Sometimes the word *taste* is used as an equivalent to *eat* or *drink* something (1 Sam 14:24; 2 Sam 3:35; Prov 23:30; Dan 5:2; Jonah 3:7; Luke 14:24; John 2:9; Acts 23:14; Col 2:21). It is used metaphorically to refer to experiencing the goodness and kindness of God (Ps 34:8; 1 Pet 2:3). The author of Hebrews also uses it metaphorically to refer to experiencing the heavenly gifts and the word of God (6:4–5). It is used elsewhere in the NT to refer to the experience of death (Matt 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; John 8:52), as it does here in Heb 2:9.

⁶³ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35.

he was able to share in human nature. Like humans (2:7), Jesus was made lower than the angels (2:9). Unlike the angels, Jesus is able to share in flesh and blood and to experience temptation, suffering, and death (2:9, 14, 18). Jesus had to be made like human beings in every way, so that he might be able to become an effective high priest (2:17).

ORIGIN/RACE/BIRTH

As noted in chapter three it was common for orators to praise the external goods of the origin, race, or noble birth of the persons who were the subjects of their encomiums. The author of Hebrews accomplishes this task through the designation of Jesus as “Son.”

Eight times Jesus is called a “Son” (υἱός; 1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 5:5, 8; 7:28), and four times he is named the “Son of God” (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29). Once he is called the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος; 1:6), and twice we are told that God has “begotten” (γενένηκα) him (1:5; 5:5). Clearly, the author affirms the “noble birth” of Jesus; as God’s Son he has the noblest heritage of all. DeSilva remarks that the “title ‘Son’ carries a message that Jesus’ honor and worth derives from the honor of the father, God himself. In the Greco-Roman world, one’s honor or standing depended largely on one’s parentage—whether one was born into low or high status.”⁶⁴

Another passage that suggests the origin of Jesus is the interesting characterization of Melchizedek in 7:3: “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.” Some patristic interpreters cleverly declared that Jesus was “without father” with respect to his humanity and “without mother” with respect to his divinity.⁶⁵ This view still finds adherents in modern times: for example, Gerald Thomas Kennedy asserts that “Because of the fact that Melchisedech was without genealogy, he has been made a type of Christ who was without mother in his eternal generation by the Father and without father in his earthly generation by the Blessed Mother.”⁶⁶ However, such a distinction reflects later christological controversies; there is really nothing in the text to suggest

⁶⁴ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 85.

⁶⁵ Demarest, *History*, 11; Greer, *Captain*, 238, 259; Hurst, *Hebrews*, 55.

⁶⁶ Gerald Thomas Kennedy, *St. Paul’s Conception of the Priesthood of Melchisedech: An Historico-Exegetical Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 84; see also Florentinus Ogara, “Christus Rex: ‘Sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedech’,” *VD* 13 (1933): 168–69.

that the author had such a distinction in mind. Jerome Neyrey, however, insightfully identifies the language of 7:3 as a “*topos* for a true deity”:

Paraphrased in terms of Greek philosophy, the author states three things of Melchizedek: he is (1) ungenerated, (2) uncreated in the past and imperishable in the future, and (3) eternal or immortal. According to my hypothesis, these three things are *topoi* from Hellenistic philosophy on what constitutes a true god. In light of the *topoi*, the figure in 7:3 should be acclaimed a true deity. That predication, however, is directed not to Melchizedek, but to Jesus. The author of Hebrews inflated the character of Melchizedek in 7:3 beyond anything found in Scripture or midrash, so as to make comparable statements about Jesus, who is unquestionably acclaimed a divine figure in Hebrews. Thus the author supplies specific content to his acclamation of Jesus as a deity, for like true gods he is fully eternal.⁶⁷

Neyrey thus points out two important matters: (1) this passage suggests Jesus’ divine origin: he is ungenerated or uncreated; (2) this passage also indicates Jesus’ divine nature: he is eternal.

While Hebrews emphasizes Jesus’ divine origin, the author also mentions his earthly heritage. Jesus is sprung (*ἀνατέταλκεν*) from the tribe of Judah (7:14), which also gave rise to the Davidic kingship.⁶⁸ Thus, Jesus even has a noble *earthly* descent. However, Jesus’ heritage from Judah is recognized as a potential problem for the author’s contention that Jesus is a high priest. Thus, the author must argue in Heb 7 that Jesus is not a priest according to the tribe of Levi, but that his priesthood is derived from an older order that is superior to the Levitical priesthood. Here we perhaps see an example of minimization; the author must downplay Jesus’ earthly genealogy in order to support his claim for Jesus’ high priesthood.

NURTURE/TRAINING/EDUCATION

In Greco-Roman rhetoric orators would often extol a person’s education or upbringing. One’s training was indicative of one’s status. The author indicates that Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” (5:8). The NEB phrases it nicely: “he learned obedience in the school of suf-

⁶⁷ Neyrey, “Without Beginning of Days,” 440.

⁶⁸ The use of the verb *ἀνατέλλω* may have messianic connotations. The same verb is used in the LXX to describe the rise of the star of Jacob (Num 24:17), the Branch (Zech 6:12; cf. Zech 3:8; Jer 23:5–6: *ἀνατολήν*), and the sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2). See also Isa 11:1; Jer 33:15; Ezek 29:21 for similar ideas (Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 124; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 123–24; Cockerill, “Melchizedek Christology,” 96–98; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 259; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 201; Kurian, *Jesus*, 115; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 187).

fering.” He learned in the “school of hard knocks” as it were. This is an unusual education to be sure, but an effective one, for the author comments in the next verse that he was “made perfect” so as to become the source of salvation for all those who obey him (5:9). Earlier, the author made the same connections between perfection, suffering, and salvation in 2:10: it was fitting for God to perfect the pioneer of salvation through sufferings. This perfection of the Son is permanent (7:28). Perfection with reference to Jesus clearly does not mean moral perfection since the author has affirmed Jesus’ sinlessness (4:15; 7:26; 9:14). Rather, it refers to the fact that Jesus’ sufferings fully qualify him for his role as high priest and as the instrument of salvation for God’s people. Jesus’ sufferings can be seen as his *vocational training* in preparation for his role as high priest.⁶⁹ Apparently, having attained perfection, Jesus is now qualified to perfect others (10:14; 12:2). Neither the law (7:19), nor the Levitical priesthood (7:11), nor gifts and sacrifices (9:9; 10:1) are able to perfect the believer.⁷⁰ Only Jesus is able to do that by virtue of his unique training. It is by means of his training through suffering that he is able to come to the aid of others (2:18).

FORTUNE

Some of the encomiastic topic lists included physical advantages under the heading of *fortune*, so we will briefly consider them here. The author of Hebrews makes no explicit mention of Jesus’ appearance or physical advantages such as health, beauty, strength, and agility.⁷¹ Jesus’ physical perfection may be implicit in the statement that Jesus “offered himself without blemish [ἄμωμον] to God” (9:14). The adjective ἄμωμος is frequently used in the LXX to designate the offering of perfect animals for

⁶⁹ Charles H. Talbert, *Learning through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 64–65.

⁷⁰ With reference to believers, *perfection* has a moral connotation (e.g., cleansing of consciences, forgiveness of sins); it refers to the preparation of the believer to be able to enter into the presence of God for worship (9:8–9; 10:1–2, 14–18).

⁷¹ DeSilva, however, claims that the “author’s discussion of Jesus’ ‘indestructible life’ introduces a standard encomiastic topos of physical advantage, namely ‘physical strength.’ It is, first, a mark of Jesus’ superior excellence that he possesses a strength that is not shared by the levitical priests.” Jesus utilizes his physical advantage to assist others: “Physical superiority becomes truly virtuous and praiseworthy when it is exercised to benefit others or to display one of the spiritual or ethical virtues. This is precisely what the author of Hebrews moves toward . . . pointing to Jesus’ use of his ‘indestructible life’ to bring benefit to his clients in a way that the levitical priests, mortal as they were, could not” (*Perseverance*, 271–72). In this study, Jesus’ indestructible life is one of the indicators of his eternal nature.

sacrifice, that is, animals without any physical defect or blemish.⁷² Of course, ἄμωμος could also refer to moral blamelessness,⁷³ a meaning that the author certainly had in mind. However, the clear sacrificial imagery—that Jesus “offered” (προσέγγεικεν) himself—allows for the possibility that the idea of physical perfection may be coupled with the moral connotation, as it also appears to be in 1 Pet 1:19.

The author also does not mention anything about Jesus’ wealth, possessions, or political power. Pseudo-Aristotle placed such topics under the heading of goods external to virtue, while Cicero, Quintilian, Theon, and Aphthonius considered these topics of secondary value in assessing the character of a person since such topics are not directly indicative of virtue. It appears, then, that the author of Hebrews chose not to discuss these advantages because they were not important for his construction of Jesus’ character. There are some topics of fortune that the author *does* address; we will consider these topics under the headings of titles/offices.

TITLES/OFFICES

Orators often praised people by appealing to their titles to fame or the offices that they held. The author of Hebrews does something similar by attributing to Jesus a variety of titles which are indicative of the many important “offices” or roles that Jesus played. We will now consider each one of these titles in turn and reflect on how they reveal the character of Jesus.

Lord

Jesus is clearly called “Lord” (κύριος) twice (7:14; 13:20). Two other instances also appear to refer to Jesus rather than God (1:10; 2:3). Grässer points out that the title is equally applied to Jesus in his earthly or exalted state.⁷⁴ The title κύριος is also a designation for God. The ten clearest references

⁷² Exod 29:1, 38; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9; 4:3, 14, 23, 28, 32; 5:15, 18, 25; 9:2, 3; 12:6; 14:10; 22:19, 21; 23:12, 18; Num 6:14; 7:88; 15:24; 19:2; 28:3, 9, 11, 19, 27, 31; 29:2, 8, 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 36; Ezek 43:22, 23, 25; 45:18, 23; 46:4, 6, 13.

⁷³ 2 Sam 22:24, 31, 33; 1 Macc 4:42; Pss 14:2 LXX; 17:24, 31, 33 LXX; 18:8, 14 LXX; 36:18 LXX; 63:5 LXX; 100:2, 6 LXX; 118:1, 80 LXX; Prov 11:5, 20; 20:7; 22:11; Wis 2:22; Sir 31:8; 40:19; Ezek 28:15; Dan 1:4. The moral connotation is carried over into the NT: Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 2:15; Col 1:22; Jude 1:24; Rev 14:5.

⁷⁴ He says, “Hebr kann den Kyrios-Titel *eindeutig* auf den Erhöhten beziehen (12,14; 13,20fin) und (wie Paulus) von daher auch auf den *irdischen* Jesus (2,3; 7,14)”; see Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:106 (italics are his).

(7:21; 8:8–11; 10:16, 30; 12:5–6; 13:6) are all LXX quotations in which κύριος translates the Tetragrammaton יהוה. There also appears to be a reference to God in 8:2. The designation in 12:14, however, is sufficiently ambiguous that it could refer to Jesus or God. Clearly, Jesus shares a title that is also ascribed to God. This is accentuated by the fact that the quotation of Ps 101:26–28 LXX, which originally referred to God, now is applied to Jesus (1:10–12).⁷⁵ This title, then, highlights a couple of important features of Jesus' character. First, Jesus shares the same divine nature as God, something we have already explored. Second, it indicates that Jesus has an authoritative status in the eyes of the author of Hebrews and his audience. The title κύριος was often used of earthly rulers or owners who had the ability or right to exercise power over other people and things.⁷⁶ By implication, then, Jesus is one who is due allegiance and obedience by his followers.

Son

As we have seen above, the designations "Son" (υἱός; 1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 5:5, 8; 7:28) and "Son of God" (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29) are ascribed to Jesus. These titles indicate the unique relationship that Jesus has with God. The author makes it clear that no angel has ever been addressed by God as "Son" (1:5). While it is true that sometimes angels are called "sons of god" in the MT and LXX, no individual angel has ever been addressed by this designation.⁷⁷ While believers may be called "sons" in relation to God (2:10; 12:5–8), the title "Son of God" is reserved for Jesus alone in Hebrews. There appears to be a qualitative difference between the "sonship" of believers and Jesus' Sonship. Jesus, as Son, has a unique and intimate relationship with God (1:5) in a way that his followers do not. MacNeill clarifies this qualitative distinction in his discussion of 5:8:

It is found in the midst of a passage which . . . emphasizes thoroughly the humanity of Christ. The thought of the immediate context is similar to that of 12:5f., which emphasizes the Father's love and care in chastening true sons. But the contrast is clearly and strongly marked in that while in 12:5f. the chastening and consequent training is natural and to be expected of

⁷⁵ "Lord" is not found in the MT but is in the LXX from which the author drew his quotation.

⁷⁶ Werner Foerster, "κύριος," *TDNT* 3:1039–58.

⁷⁷ Gen 6:2, 4; Pss 29:1 (28:1 LXX); 89:6 (88:7 LXX). The LXX sometimes renders "sons of God" in the MT as "angels" or "angels of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25); see Koester, *Hebrews*, 191.

every son (cf. 12:6), in 5:8 the author designates the chastening and sufferings of Christ as altogether exceptional and exceptional just because he was a "Son." This marks the Sonship of Christ as in the author's conception unique.⁷⁸

The designation "Son" has royal connotations in Hebrews. Both quotations in 1:5 originally took place within the context of Israelite kingship, and in 1:8 the author mentions the Son's throne. The designation "Son" may also imply divine status for Jesus. The quotation of Ps 44:7–8 LXX in Heb 1:8–9 is applied to Jesus, who is addressed as "God" (θεός). His eternal nature is implied in 7:3, where it is said that Melchizedek, who is likened to the Son, has "neither beginning of days nor end of life." As Son, Jesus receives an inheritance of "all things" from his father (1:2). Jesus' status as Son is clearly superior to Moses' servant status (3:5–6). Since Jesus is the Son of God, there are dire consequences for one's salvation for rejecting him (6:6; 10:29).

Verse 1:4 seems to suggest that Jesus received the name "Son" at his exaltation. The question is raised, then, when does Jesus become the Son? Käsemann argues that the designation "Son" in 1:2 and 5:7 are only proleptic applications of the title to Jesus.⁷⁹ Schenck offers a better explanation; one must make a distinction between Jesus' identity and his role: "At his enthronement, Christ truly *becomes* Son in the sense that he assumes his royal office and takes his divine 'appointment', but in his *identity* he has always been the Son."⁸⁰ Similarly, Silva distinguishes between Jesus' divine nature as Son and the messianic title he receives.⁸¹

Firstborn

Jesus is called the "firstborn" (πρωτότοκος) in 1:6, a term closely related to "Son." The firstborn son generally had favored status in the family. Firstborn sons were often singled out in genealogical lists.⁸² The firstborn of humans and animals were consecrated to God either through sacrifice or redemption.⁸³ The loss of a firstborn son was considered a great trag-

⁷⁸ MacNeill, *Christology*, 92.

⁷⁹ Käsemann, *Wandering*, 98.

⁸⁰ Kenneth Lee Schenck, "Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JNST* 66 (1997): 99.

⁸¹ Moisés Silva, "Perfection and Eschatology in Hebrews," *WTJ* 39 (1976): 63.

⁸² Gen 10:15; 22:21; 25:13; 35:23; 36:15; 38:6–7; 46:8; 49:3; Exod 6:14; Num 1:20; 3:2; 26:5; Josh 17:1; 1 Sam 8:2; 14:49; 2 Sam 3:2; 1 Chr 1:29; 2:13, 25, 27, 42, 50; 3:1, 15; 4:4; 5:3, 12; 6:13; 8:1, 30, 39; 9:5, 31, 36; 26:2, 4.

⁸³ Gen 4:4 LXX; Exod 13:2, 15; 22:29; 34:19–20; Lev 27:26; Num 3:12–13, 40–50; 8:16–18; 18:15–17; Deut 12:6, 17; 14:23; 15:19; Neh 10:36.

edy and an occasion of great mourning (Zech 12:10), which presumably is why the firstborn sons of Egypt were singled out for execution during the Passover (Exod 4:23; 11:5; 12:2, 29; Pss 78:51; 105:36; 135:8; Heb 11:28). Under normal circumstances the firstborn son was expected to receive the birthright and blessing from the patriarch of the family.⁸⁴ The firstborn was expected to receive a double portion of the inheritance (Deut 21:15–17). In a royal monarchy, the firstborn son was usually expected to succeed his father to the throne (2 Chr 21:3). In the OT “firstborn” is used twice symbolically to designate Israel’s favored status with God (Exod 4:23; Jer 31:9). In the NT it is used of Jesus once literally (Luke 2:7), but most often it is used in a symbolic sense (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 1:5). Symbolically, “firstborn” indicates priority in time and/or superiority in dignity or status.⁸⁵ In Col 1:18 and Rev 1:5, “firstborn” refers to Jesus’ resurrection; he is the first among those who are raised. Thomas Schreiner suggests that in Rom 8:29 “firstborn” indicates Jesus’ preeminence over and solidarity with humanity.⁸⁶ These passages then find resonances with Heb 2:5–18 in which Jesus identifies with humanity and shares in their human nature so that he can help bring “many sons to glory” (2:10).⁸⁷ Colossians 1:15 places “firstborn” within a protological context; Jesus is described as the “image [εἰκὼν] of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” This language is reminiscent of the claims made about Jesus in the exordium (1:2–3), as well as here in verse 6. It is quite likely, however, that the author had Ps 88:28 LXX in mind when he called Jesus the “firstborn.” Ps 88:28 LXX says “I will make him the firstborn [πρωτότοκον], the highest of the kings of the earth.”⁸⁸ If the author had this Scripture in mind, then it indicates that

⁸⁴ In Gen 25:31–34; 27; 48:18; and 1 Chr 5:1 the firstborn son did not receive the birthright and/or blessing due to extenuating circumstances.

⁸⁵ MacNeill, *Christology*, 69; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 11; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 56; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 60, 67; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 333.

⁸⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 454.

⁸⁷ James Dunn makes the connection to this passage with regard to Rom 8:29; see *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 484–85.

⁸⁸ So, Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 67; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56n70; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:26; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 79; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 54; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 69. Psalm 88 LXX has three general movements. Verses 2–19 comprise a hymn praising God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, power, and righteousness. Verses 20–38 consist of an oracle recounting the covenant God made with David. The remaining section (vv. 39–53) contains a lament over the calamities that have befallen the Davidic kingship. Psalms scholars have generally recognized the affinities of the central section to Nathan’s prophecy in 2 Sam 7:4–17; see Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:630; Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 319, 322; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 201, 208–9; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 417; Mays, *Psalms*, 285; McCann, “Psalms,” 1035–36; Limburg, *Psalms*, 304; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 220. Anderson surmises that “it could be an expansion of Nathan’s prophecy in 2 Sam. 7:4–17” (*Psalms*, 2:630), while Kidner declares

“firstborn” also had royal connotations for him, which would be consistent with the rest of chapter 1. The designation of Jesus as the “firstborn” thus suggests Jesus’ supremacy and favored status before God. This designation comes immediately after the two Scripture citations of verse 5 in which God affirms Jesus as his Son. Moreover, as already noted, Jesus, as the firstborn son, receives the inheritance of “all things” from his father (1:2). The angels are commanded to worship Jesus, the “firstborn,” in 1:6, further connoting his divine status.

Heir

As a natural consequence of Jesus’ Sonship, Jesus is appointed “heir of all things” (κληρονόμον πάντων; 1:2). Moses Stuart explains that in classical Greek, a κληρονόμος is: (1) one who acquires anything by lot; or (2) one who inherits anything after the death of the possessor.⁸⁹ Jesus did not obtain his inheritance in either of these two ways. Therefore, Stuart suggests that the author uses κληρονόμος “in the manner of the Hebrew שִׁירָה, which means *to take into possession* in any manner, or simply *to acquire*.”⁹⁰ The title “heir” suggests that one has lordship or dominion over something (cf. Gal 4:1: κύριος πάντων). That Jesus is “heir of all things” indicates his dominion is without restriction or limitation. Hughes points out that “Christ is the heir of *all* things precisely because God has only *one* Son and *one* Heir.”⁹¹ That God was willing to entrust such a responsibility to his Son suggests Jesus’ reliability and also points towards his divinity; as John Brown deduces, “Such property and dominion is infinitely too great for a creature to receive, and could be managed by no power and wisdom inferior to infinite.”⁹²

The designation “heir” seems to have been suggested by Ps 2 LXX. Verse 7 of the psalm is quoted in 1:5, but Ps 2:8 LXX says, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage [κληρονομίαν], and the ends of the earth your possession.” Other passages also hint at Jesus’ heirship. Jesus is told that when he sits at the right hand of God, his enemies will be made a

that the prophecy of Nathan is the “foundation to this psalm” (Kidner, *Psalms* 73–150, 319). Psalms scholars have also noted the affinities of this section, particularly verse 26, with Ps 2:7 (Weiser, *Psalms*, 592; Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:641; Kidner, *Psalms* 73–150, 323; Kraus, *Psalms* 60–150, 209; Tate, *Psalms*, 424; Mays, *Psalms*, 286). The author of Hebrews has just cited both 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7 in the previous verse.

⁸⁹ Stuart, *Hebrews*, 267.

⁹⁰ Stuart, *Hebrews*, 267–68 (italics his). See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 94–95.

⁹¹ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 39 (italics his).

⁹² J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 26.

footstool for his feet (1:13; cf. 10:13). In 2:8–9 the author implies that Jesus, as the representative for all humanity, has all things placed in subjection to him. Jesus' heirship indicates, then, his authority and dominion over all things.

High Priest

One of the most common designations for Jesus in Hebrews is "high priest" (ἀρχιερεύς), which appears ten times (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11). Four times ἀρχιερεύς refers to high priests in general (5:1; 8:3; 9:25; 13:11), but some of the things said about these high priests also apply to Jesus. Once he is called a "great priest [ιερέα μέγαν] over the house of God" (10:21). Once he is called a "great high priest" (ἀρχιερέα μέγαν; 4:14). This ostensibly redundant phrase probably implies superiority over the Levitical priests.⁹³ Only three times is Jesus referred to simply as a "priest" (ιερεύς), but in all three instances it is found in the quotation from Ps 109:4 LXX, which is applied to Jesus (5:6; 7:17, 21). Although Jesus is compared to Melchizedek, Melchizedek is never identified as a high priest, but only as a priest (7:1, 3).

A textual variant at 9:11 creates some difficulties. In some ancient witnesses Jesus is described as the "high priest of the good things that have come" (ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν).⁹⁴ In other ancient witnesses Jesus is described as the "high priest of the good things to come" (ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν).⁹⁵ Both readings are well attested so a decision between the two is difficult. Scholars who accept μελλόντων suspect that γενομένων is an echo of παραγενόμενος and that μελλόντων fits better with the thought of Hebrews.⁹⁶ Increasingly, scholars are favoring γενομένων because they reason that μελλόντων is likely a scribal assimilation to 10:1

⁹³ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 90; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 120; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 124; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 139.

⁹⁴ (P⁴⁶:γεναμένων) B D* 1611 1739 2005 it^{d,e} syr^{p,h} Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom.

⁹⁵ Ⲙ A D² I^{vid} K L P 0142 0278 33 81 88 101 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 630 1241 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 2492 2495 lat sy^h mg co arm eth Eusebius, Ephraem, Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, Cyril, Proclus, Euthalius, Theodoret, Ps-Athanasius, Cosmas, John of Damascus.

⁹⁶ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:76; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 255; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 120; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 77; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:256; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 122; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 151; Michel, *Hebräer*, 310; Zimmerman, *Bekenntnis*, 189–90; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 177; Anderson, *King-Priest*, 168; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 272–73. NASB and NKJV follow this reading: "good things to come."

(τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν) and that γενομένων is the harder reading.⁹⁷ On the whole, the latter reading seems to be preferable. If μελλόντων is accepted as the better reading, then the blessings of the new covenant still lie in the future for the audience. The more likely reading, γενομένων, indicates that the blessings of the new covenant have already been inaugurated with Jesus and are being experienced by the community. On either reading, the beneficent character of Jesus is made evident. Through his work as high priest Jesus extends the blessing of “good things” to humanity.

Jesus had to *become* a high priest (2:17; 5:5; 6:20; 7:16). It was necessary for another priest to “arise” (ἀνίστημι; 7:11, 15) that was not according to the Levitical priesthood, thus suggesting that Jesus’ priesthood at one time did not exist. The contrary-to-fact conditional in 8:4 indicates that Jesus was not a priest on earth. His priesthood is heavenly (4:14; 6:19–20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11–12; 10:12). Priests have to be “appointed” (καθίστημι) from among men (5:1; 7:28; 8:3). Jesus did not “appoint” (literally, “glorify”; ἐδόξασεν) himself as high priest (5:5). Hagedorn points out that the high priest should not be ambitious; it is not an office to be coveted to advance one’s career.⁹⁸ History provides plenty of examples when the office was acquired by force or fraud.⁹⁹ Instead, Jesus was “designated” (προσαγορευθείς) by God (5:10). How do we reconcile this with the fact that the author calls Jesus’ priesthood “eternal”? A brief examination of the expressions used is illuminating. The prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα literally means “into the age” (5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28). The expression, εἰς τὸ διηνεχές (7:3; 10:1, 12, 14), literally means “into the continuous” and can be translated as “for all time,” “continually,” or “perpetually.” These expressions suggest everlastingness rather than eternity, that is, Jesus’ role as high priest has a fixed beginning point but no end point; his role as high priest has a permanent,

⁹⁷ Alfred Seeberg, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (ETB; Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1912), 105; Theodore H. Robinson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (MNTC; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), 125–26; Héring, *Hébreux*, 84; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 140; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 146–47; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 327; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 185; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 248; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 149; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 244–45; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 211n68; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:76; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 106; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 464; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:144; Koester, *Hebrews*, 407; Gerd Schunack, *Der Hebräerbrief* (ZBK 14; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2002), 122; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 234–35; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 181; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 268; Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (2d ed.; Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 119; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 317; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 319. Lane argues that, while μελλόντων has greater manuscript support, the witnesses for γενομένων are superior in age and in diversity of text type (*Hebrews*, 2:229). Translations that favor this reading include the NRSV, ESV, NIV, and NLT.

⁹⁸ Norbert Hagedorn, *Le sacerdoce du fils: Commentaire de l’Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1983), 57.

⁹⁹ Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 96.

future status. This permanent status is in clear contrast to the Levitical priests whose role was only temporary due to death (7:23).

Jesus had to fulfill certain requirements in order to become high priest. Jesus had to be made like all humans (2:17; cf. 5:1 where it says that priests must be taken from among men), he had to partake of flesh and blood (2:14), he had to experience temptation (2:18; 4:15) and suffering (2:10, 18; 5:8), and yet remain sinless (4:15; 7:26–27), having been perfected in obedience (5:8–9; cf. 7:28). Furthermore, it seems that his entrance into heaven was also a requirement (6:20; 9:11), which also presupposes his sacrificial death (9:12; 10:12). Clearly, it was not his lineage (7:14–16) that was a prerequisite for his priesthood, as it was for the Levitical priesthood, but his eternal nature (7:24). Paradoxically, the author speaks about Jesus' indestructible life (7:16) and eternity, while also affirming that Jesus died (2:9, 14).

The author uses *synkrisis* to compare the priesthood of Jesus with the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' priesthood is superior in a number of ways. First, Jesus is without sin (4:15), while the Levitical priests have sinned (5:2–3). The Levitical priests were obligated to offer a sacrifice on behalf of their own sins (5:3; 7:27), while Jesus was not (7:27). Second, Jesus is eternal (7:16–17, 24–25), while the Levitical priests are ephemeral (7:8, 23), that is, the Levitical priests are subject to death, while Jesus has an indestructible life. Third, as a corollary of the previous point, Jesus' priesthood is singular (7:24), while the Levitical priesthood is plural (7:23). As Attridge notes, the "multiplicity of the Levitical priests is not synchronic, but diachronic. They are 'many' in the sense that individual priests must be replaced."¹⁰⁰ The problem for the author of Hebrews is that "multiplicity signifies incompleteness, imperfection, and inconclusiveness."¹⁰¹ Fourth, Jesus' priesthood is confirmed with a divine oath (7:20–21, 28), while the Levitical priesthood was not.¹⁰² Here we have an instance of divine testimony that gives witness to the reliability and stability of Jesus' priesthood.

Fifth, Jesus' ministry is also superior to the Levitical priesthood's; while the Levitical priests served in an earthly sanctuary (8:4–5; 9:6, 25), Jesus has passed through the heavens (4:14) and entered the heavenly sanctuary not made with hands (8:1; 9:11, 24), and is now seated in the very

¹⁰⁰ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 209.

¹⁰¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:188.

¹⁰² According to Bonsirven, the divine oath also implies the immutability and eternity of Jesus' priesthood (*Hébreux*, 337).

presence of God (8:1; 9:24). Sixth, Jesus offers superior sacrifices than those of the Levitical priests (9:23). While the Levitical priests offered bulls and goats (9:12–13, 19; 10:4; cf. 13:11), Jesus offered himself (9:12, 14, 26; 10:10; 13:12). Moreover, it was necessary for the Levitical priests to offer sacrifices repeatedly (9:25; 10:1–4, 11), while Jesus only has to perform the sacrifice once (9:25–28; 10:10–14). Hence, the author also provides a synkrisis between Jesus as the perfect sacrifice, and the sacrifices of the old covenant.

Jesus displayed certain qualities in his role as high priest. The author directly describes him as a “merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17). The author elaborates on the second trait first in the section that immediately follows (3:1–6). This discussion of the *faithfulness* of Jesus could be extended to 4:11, since it is through his faithfulness that believers can enter into God’s rest. Jesus’ *mercy* is elaborated upon in 4:14–5:10. He is able to sympathize with human weakness (4:15), which enables believers to approach God’s throne to receive mercy and grace (4:16).

In 7:26 the author amasses a series of adjectives characterizing Jesus as high priest; he is “holy, blameless, undefiled, and separated from sinners” (7:26). The first three adjectives in this series are more or less synonymous with one another. The first term, ὅσιος, means “pious, devout, religious, sinless, pure, holy.”¹⁰³ Ellingworth says that ὅσιος “denotes a quality of piety or devotion to God.”¹⁰⁴ The second term, ἄκακος, means “guileless, innocent.”¹⁰⁵ It connotes someone who is free from guilt or evil and who is incapable of bringing harm to another person.¹⁰⁶ The third term, ἀμίαντος, means “undefiled, pure, free from stain.”¹⁰⁷ It refers to one who is morally and spiritually flawless.¹⁰⁸ The next phrase, “separated from sinners” (κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν), is the most difficult to decipher. The phrase has two possible meanings: (1) ethical: Jesus is morally distinct from sinners; or (2) spatial: Jesus is physically separated from sinners, that is, he is now in the heavenly realm.¹⁰⁹ The latter interpretation

¹⁰³ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1260–61.

¹⁰⁴ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 393.

¹⁰⁵ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 130; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 128–29; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 393.

¹⁰⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 130.

¹⁰⁹ Those favoring the ethical meaning include, Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 237; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 283; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 126; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 274–75; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 206; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:47; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 249. Those favoring the spatial meaning include, Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 101; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:201; Héring, *Hébreux*, 73; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 130; Michel, *Hebräer*, 280; Cockerill, “Melchizedek Christology,” 168; Morris, “Hebrews,”

is more likely in light of the following phrase, “exalted above the heavens” (ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος), which also uses a participle and suggests a spatial orientation. Nevertheless, the ethical meaning cannot be ruled out entirely.

Jesus as high priest is by far the most pervasive image in Hebrews. Many actions are attributed to Jesus that relate to his role as high priest. His deeds will be discussed below under “actions/events.”

“King”

Jesus is also depicted as having royal status. Although, Jesus is never directly called a “king” or “prince” or any other such title, the allusions to his royal status are quite apparent. These allusions are most prevalent in the opening chapter of the book. In the course of the catena of quotations, the author cites Ps 109:1 LXX: “sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” Hebrews alludes to this opening verse of the royal psalm four other times.¹¹⁰ During the opening prescript, the author says that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3). The author includes throne imagery elsewhere in 8:1 (Jesus “is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”) and 12:2 (Jesus “has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God”). In 10:12 the author simply notes that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of God,” but then he alludes to the latter part of Ps 109:1 LXX: “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” The royal imagery thus indicates the privileged status that Jesus has at being at the right hand of God and also shows that he will be victorious over his enemies.

The catena contains other allusions to Jesus’ royal status. The author quotes and recasts a passage from another royal psalm, Ps 2:7 LXX, in Heb

72; Braun, *Hebräer*, 223; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 213; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:192; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 393; Craddock, “Hebrews,” 94; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 275; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 195; Kurianal, *Jesus*, 147; Joslin, *Law*, 157; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 162; Allen, *Hebrews*, 430; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 219; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 341. Scholars who allow for both meanings include, Guers, *Hébreux*, 204; Bertram L. Melbourne, “An Examination of the Historical-Jesus Motif in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *AUSS* 26 (1988): 291; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 176n88; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 422; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:69; Koester, *Hebrews*, 367; David J. MacLeod, “Christ, the Believer’s High Priest: An Exposition of Hebrews 7:26–28,” *BSac* 162 (2005): 337–38; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 155; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 280.

¹¹⁰ This psalm is cited or alluded to frequently in the NT and clearly had messianic connotations for the early church: Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42–43; 22:69; Acts 22:34–35; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25–28; Eph 1:20–22; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:22. In addition, the author cites verse 4 of the psalm three times (5:6; 7:17, 21).

1:5.¹¹¹ In the psalm, the kings of the earth take their stand together against the Lord's anointed (vv. 2–3). In defiance of the nations (vv. 4–5), God has installed his king in Jerusalem (v. 6), whom he declares is his Son (v. 7).

¹¹¹ The temporal adverb “today” (σήμερον) has provoked considerable discussion over the occasion that is in view: (1) Eternity/timelessness. This view is preferred by many ancient and medieval interpreters and some modern ones. See Origen, *In Joh.* 1.1; Athanasius; Augustine, *Enchiridion* 49; idem, *Ps 2.7*; Theophylact; Aquinas, *Ad Heb* 49; Friedrich Bleek, *Der Brief an die Hebräer erläutert durch Einleitung, Uebersetzung und fortlaufenden Commentar* (3 vols.; Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1828–1840), 2.1:118–19; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 57; Ménégoz, *Théologie*, 82; A. S. Peake, *Hebrews: Introduction, Authorized Version, Revised Version with Notes, and Index* (NCB; 1900; repr., New York: Henry Frowde, 1925), 82; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 190; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 55; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 44; Michel, *Hebräer*, 110; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 245; Mary Rose D’Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 42; Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1979), 165; Tetley, “Priesthood,” 124; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 332, 335. Scholars who hold to this view believe that Hebrews alludes to the eternal generation of the Son (Ménégoz is an exception; he sees Jesus as a created being). (2) Jesus’ incarnation and/or birth. Scholars who hold this view often point to the annunciation in Luke 1:35 where the angel Gabriel announces that Jesus “will be called Son of God.” See Theodore of Mopsuestia; Chrysostom; Eusebius; Riggensbach, *Hebräer*, 18; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:16. (3) Jesus’ baptism (and transfiguration). The announcement of God, “You are my son,” at Jesus’ baptism (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7) appears to be an allusion to Ps 2:7. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88, 103; Hilary, *De Trinitate* 8.25; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 79. (4) Jesus’ resurrection. Paul’s speech in Acts 13:33 quotes Ps 2:7 in reference to Jesus’ resurrection. Some scholars also see an affinity to Rom 1:4 where Paul says that Jesus “was declared to be Son of God with power” at his resurrection. See Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 64; Long, *Hebrews*, 17. (5) Jesus’ ascension, exaltation, and enthronement. Scholars who take this view note that Ps 2 was originally a royal enthronement hymn. Most scholars who support this view also would subsume the resurrection under this heading since the author of Hebrews appears to have viewed the resurrection/exaltation as one event. See Ambrose; Calvin; McLean, *Hebrews*, 29; Stuart, *Hebrews*, 272; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 21; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 21; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 90–91; Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ*, 141–42; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 54–55; Braun, *Hebräer*, 35; Meier, “Symmetry,” 505; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 51; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 54; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:79; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 161; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 114; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 69, 75; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 47; Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Reading the New Testament; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 27; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 53–54; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 67; Allen, *Hebrews*, 172. (6) No time element is in view. The temporal adverb is simply part of the quotation; the author of Hebrews did not consider the time element to be important. See Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 9; Morris, “Hebrews,” 18; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 73; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 38; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 160; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 96. Erich Grässer argues that it futile to try to determine a specific time (*Hebräer*, 1:74–75). Of the options presented here, the most likely one is that the author had the ascension/exaltation/enthronement of Jesus in view. The entire context of the first chapter supports this view. The exordium climaxes with Jesus sitting at the right hand of God and inheriting a greater name than the angels (1:4). The exordium then immediately leads to this first quotation. Affinities with the last quotation of the catena (1:13), as well as with some of the other quotations in chapter 1 which have royal connotations, suggest the enthronement of Jesus. It also appears that the declaration, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you,” is a formula of installation upon the occasion of the king’s coronation. Robert Gordon explains that “the newly crowned king entered by an adoptive decree (cf. Ps. 2.7) into a relationship of special privileges and nearness to God” (Gordon, *Hebrews*, 58–59). In fact, it appears that the entire catena should be viewed as a royal coronation of the Son.

The nations are urged to submit to the Son (vv. 10–12) whose victory is inevitable (vv. 8–9). The Son is depicted as ruling alongside God, which demonstrates his superiority over the angels.

The author's second quotation in 1:5, taken from 2 Sam 7:14 LXX (or 1 Chr 17:13 LXX), carries the theme forward.¹¹² In the original context of the verse, God (speaking through the prophet Nathan) tells David that he will not build the temple but that his descendent will. It is his descendent whose kingdom God will establish forever, and as recast in Hebrews, it is his descendent, Jesus, whom God calls his Son.

In Heb 1:8–9 the author cites Ps 44:7–8 LXX, which is a psalm addressed to the king on the occasion of his marriage. But again, the author applies these verses to the Son. The Son is addressed as God and is promised an everlasting kingdom. It is clear from these series of quotations that the title "Son" has royal connotations for the author. Jesus' kingship, as indicated by metonymy (throne, scepter), is marked by eternity (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος) and righteousness (εὐθύτης; δικαιοσύνης).

Jesus' royal status is also subtly suggested in chapter 7 where Jesus' priesthood is compared to Melchizedek's. Melchizedek, we are told, was both a king and a priest, thus embodying both roles in himself (7:1). Since Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe, he could not be a priest in the Levitical system (7:14), but since Jesus' priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 19; cf. 7:15), Jesus is also able to incorporate the royal role in himself. The author's use of etymology reveals that Melchizedek was "king of righteousness" and "king of peace." It is likely that the author intended that these virtues also be attributed to Jesus. DeSilva points out that "Prophetic and intertestamental literature frequently attributes the qualities of justice and peace (or safety, wholeness) to the Messiah and his reign."¹¹³

Ἀρχηγός

Twice Jesus is called an ἀρχηγός. He is the ἀρχηγός of salvation (2:10) and the ἀρχηγός and perfecter of faith (12:2). The term ἀρχηγός is related to the verb ἄρχω, which means "to rule" or "to begin." Both connotations can be found in ἀρχηγός. In Greek literature ἀρχηγός could refer to the "hero" or "founder" of a city, an "originator" or "author," or a "captain."¹¹⁴ In the LXX

¹¹² Ellingworth believes the author is quoting 1 Chr 17 because there is no mention of the king committing iniquity and God's chastisement as there is in 2 Sam 7 (*Hebrews*, 114).

¹¹³ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 266. See his many references in footnote 8.

¹¹⁴ Delling, "ἀρχηγός," *TDNT* 1:487.

ἀρχηγός could refer to a political or military “leader” or the “head” of a clan.¹¹⁵ Other words that have been used to translate ἀρχηγός include “ruler,” “prince,” and “pioneer.”¹¹⁶ Commentators have suggested even more colorful descriptions such as “pathfinder,” “trailblazer,” “guide,” “champion,” or “hero.”¹¹⁷ So it is difficult to identify one translation that captures all the nuances of the term. The term can also be used figuratively to refer to a person who is “the leader and example in an action, who stirs others to follow.”¹¹⁸

In the NT ἀρχηγός is used four times in a figurative way to refer to Jesus. The two other instances are found in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:15 he is designated the ἀρχηγός of life, which suggests that he is the source of life for believers through his death and resurrection. In 5:31 he is called an ἀρχηγός and savior; these two expressions together appear to form a hendiadys and seem to resemble the thought contained in Heb 2:10. Jesus is the source of salvation for believers. This same idea is expressed in Heb 5:9, where Jesus is described as the “source” or “cause” (αἰτίας) of eternal salvation.¹¹⁹ In 12:2 Jesus is also described as the ἀρχηγός of faith. In connection with “perfector,” the term suggests one who is an “originator.” The term ἀρχηγός thus suggests that Jesus is both the originator of the faith and the one who leads humanity to salvation.

Perfector

Jesus is also called the “perfector” (τελειωτής) of faith (12:2). Perfection is a thematic thread that weaves its way throughout the book of Hebrews. Jesus had to be “perfected” (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings, which enabled him to become the source of salvation to believers (2:10; 5:9) and to become an effective high priest (2:17–18). Since perfection was unattainable through the Levitical priesthood, it was necessary for Jesus to become a perfect priest according to the order of Melchizedek (7:11, 28). Likewise, the old covenant gifts and sacrifices were impotent to perfect the believer (9:9; 10:1), so it was necessary for Jesus to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice

¹¹⁵ Delling, “ἀρχηγός,” *TDNT* 1:487. See Exod 6:14; Num 10:4; 13:2–3; 16:2; 25:4; Deut 33:21; Judg 5:15; 9:44; 11:6, 11; 1 Chr 5:24; 12:21; 26:26; 2 Chr 23:14; Neh 2:9; 7:70–71.

¹¹⁶ H. Bietenhard, “Beginning, Origin, Rule, Ruler, Originator,” *NIDNTT* 1:168.

¹¹⁷ W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 102–3; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 80; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:56–57; Long, *Hebrews*, 39; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 107; J. Julius Scott, “Archēgos in the Salvation History of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JETS* 29 (1986): 47.

¹¹⁸ Delling, “ἀρχηγός,” *TDNT* 1:487. See Mic 1:13; 1 Macc 9:61; 10:47; Jer 3:4; Lam 2:10.

¹¹⁹ Meeter points out that αἰτίας connotes authorship but does not convey the idea of leadership in the way that ἀρχηγός does (*Heavenly High Priesthood*, 40).

(9:14; 10:14). Here Jesus is the one who can help bring the believer's faith to completion. As the author and perfecter of faith Jesus is also a model for believers to follow. The catalog of heroes of chapter 11 finds its culmination in these verses about Jesus. As deSilva notes, "Hebrews 12:2 provides the climactic example of living by faith."¹²⁰ Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the faith; hence believers are urged to fix their eyes (ἀφορῶντες) on Jesus as the ultimate exemplar of faith (12:2).

Apostle

In 3:1 Jesus is called the "apostle [ἀπόστολος] . . . of our confession." An "apostle" (a word based on the verb ἀποστέλλω) is one who is sent (Mark 3:14; John 13:16). Jesus is never called "apostle" anywhere else in the NT, but frequently it is said that Jesus was one who was "sent" by God.¹²¹ "Apostle" seems to have originally designated the twelve disciples of Jesus (Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:25–26), but later was used to designate other early Christian leaders (e.g., Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:14). Paul referred to himself as an apostle (e.g., Rom 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1–2; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 2:6), as well as others (Rom 16:7; Phil 2:25). An apostle seems to be an office in the early church (1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 2:20; 4:11; Rev 18:20), so much so that Paul could talk about "false apostles," that is, those who were posing as apostles (2 Cor 11:13; cf. Rev 2:2). This designation would make sense only if others could be considered apostles apart from the circle of the twelve. Apostles, then, appear to be people who were commissioned for service, for example, as messengers or missionaries.

Some scholars have suggested that "apostle" refers to an ambassador or envoy.¹²² The apostle was a "representative sent with powers, authorized to speak in the name of the person who has dispatched him"¹²³ Melbourne makes the interesting observation that "while earthly ambassadors do not assume the nationality of the countries in which they serve, Jesus, as God's ambassador to man, assumed humanity."¹²⁴ Vanhoye appeals to Mal 2:7 which states that the priest is God's messenger (ἄγγελος in the LXX). Since

¹²⁰ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 431.

¹²¹ The verb ἀποστέλλω is used of Jesus in Matt 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke (4:18), 43; 9:48; 10:16; John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21; Acts 3:26; 1 John 4:9, 10, 14. The verb πέμπω is used in John 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:16, 20; 14:24, 26; 15:21; 16:5; 20:21; Rom 8:3. Galatians 4:4 uses the verb ἐξαποστέλλω.

¹²² Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 44; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 20; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 55.

¹²³ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 41.

¹²⁴ Melbourne, "Historical-Jesus," 289.

the author has just argued that Jesus was greater than the angels, he uses an equivalent term, “apostle,” to avoid confusion.¹²⁵ Some scholars have claimed that “apostle” is an equivalent term to the *shaliach* (שליח) of Rabbinic Judaism.¹²⁶ Lane explains that “Jewish sources indicate that the high priest was regarded as the fully accredited representative (שליח) of God before the people” on the Day of Atonement.¹²⁷ More likely is that Jesus is called “apostle” by virtue of the comparison with Moses who was in a sense an apostle sent (ἀποστέλλω) by God to the Israelites (Exod 3:10, 13–15; 4:28; 5:22; 7:16).¹²⁸

While there is no explicit mention of God “sending” Jesus in Hebrews, the idea may be more subtle. Jesus is contrasted with angels who are sent (ἀποστέλλόμενα) to serve humanity (1:14). In addition, Jesus is the messenger of God’s word (1:2; 2:3; 2:12) and the one who accomplishes the mission of redemption (1:3; 2:14–18). Thus, the designation of Jesus as “apostle” appears to sum up the author’s presentation in the first two chapters. In summary, the title “apostle” indicates Jesus’ authority as one commissioned by God to represent him.

Forerunner

In 6:20 we are told that Jesus entered as a “forerunner” (πρόδρομος) into heaven (6:20). The term is used both in military and athletic contexts.¹²⁹ A πρόδρομος may refer to scouts preceding an army, advance ships of a fleet, or heralds announcing the approach of a party. In athletics πρόδρομος refers to the lead runner in a footrace. Jesus is the first one to cross the finish line as it were. If the racing metaphor is in mind, it also anticipates 12:1 in which the author urges his readers to run the race of life with endurance while fixing their eyes on Jesus, the “pioneer” (ἀρχηγός), who has now sat down at the right hand of God (12:2). Thus, πρόδρομος and ἀρχηγός seem to

¹²⁵ Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 125; cf. Kosmala, *Hebräer*, 76–79.

¹²⁶ Rengstorf, “ἀπόστολος,” *TDNT* 1:413–37; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 54; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 70; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 86. Hughes rejects this idea as it was not part of the terminology of the OT (*Hebrews*, 127).

¹²⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:75. See *b. Qidd.* 23b; *Ned.* 35b; *Yoma* 19a–b.

¹²⁸ Some have suggested that the dual expression, “apostle and high priest” combines the functions of Moses and Aaron in Jesus (Westcott, *Hebrews*, 75; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 128). Attridge, on the other hand, sees no reason to press the typology here (*Hebrews*, 107).

¹²⁹ Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:307; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 185; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:154; Craddock, “Hebrews,” 82.

convey similar ideas of one who prepares the way for others.¹³⁰ Craddock perceptively observes that in “the culture of the tabernacle or Temple, the high priest was not a forerunner. No others, not even priests, followed him into the holy of holies; he went alone. By contrast, Christ . . . was a forerunner; that is, he prepared for others to follow.”¹³¹ Thus, by the usage of this title, the author of Hebrews offers an implicit synkrisis between Jesus and the Levitical priests. Jesus as the forerunner provides confidence for his followers since he has already entered into the heavenly realm. Some interpreters identify the “anchor” in the previous verse (6:19) as a symbol of Jesus,¹³² but more likely it is a metaphor for *hope* which grounds its confidence in Jesus the forerunner.¹³³

Guarantee

In 7:22 the author employs another metaphor, calling Jesus the “guarantee” (ἔγγυος) of a better covenant. The word ἔγγυος means a “pledge,” “surety,” or “guarantee.”¹³⁴ O. Becker says that the ἔγγυος ensured “that a legal obligation would be carried out.”¹³⁵ Such legal obligations might include guaranteeing the payment of a debt, giving bail for a prisoner, or the assurance that contractual stipulations will be carried out.¹³⁶ Since ἔγγυος may refer to a person who guarantees his or her own life for another, the translation “guarantor” is appropriate.¹³⁷ In this respect the guarantor may assume a greater risk than a mediator would.¹³⁸ This metaphor expresses Jesus’ reliability since he is able to guarantee the enactment of God’s promises for his people.

¹³⁰ Meeter points out that πρόδρομος conveys the idea of leadership, but not authorship, while ἀρχηγός connotes both concepts (*Heavenly High Priesthood*, 40).

¹³¹ Craddock, “Hebrews,” 82. See also McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 49–50.

¹³² Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 59; Ceslas Spicq, “Ἀγκυρα et Πρόδρομος dans Hébr. VI. 19–20,” *ST* 3 (1951): 186; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 227n155; Grässer, *Glaube*, 116n302; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 151, 211.

¹³³ The relative pronoun ἣν most likely refers to ἐλπίδος in the previous verse (6:18).

¹³⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 192. George Wesley Buchanan identifies the ἔγγυος as a “warrant” or a “bond, bail, collateral, escrow, or some kind of guarantee that a promise will be fulfilled”; see *The Book of Hebrews: Its Challenge from Zion* (Intertextual Bible Commentary; Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 234; emphasis his.

¹³⁵ O. Becker, “ἔγγυος,” *NIDNTT* 1:372.

¹³⁶ Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 145; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:188; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 192.

¹³⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:188; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 153; cf. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 468.

¹³⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 171n70; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:188.

Mediator

In another title related to the new covenant, Jesus is called the “mediator” (μεσίτης) of the new covenant three times (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). The μεσίτης was the liaison between two parties, the “mediator,” “arbitrator,” or “umpire.” The μεσίτης may be called in to settle a legal dispute between two parties. Becker states that the μεσίτης “could be the administrator or trustee for something in dispute. He was also the witness to legal business that had been settled with the responsibility of guaranteeing that the decision would be carried out. He could be a pawnbroker and sometimes a guarantor . . . who guarantees the liabilities of another with his own property.”¹³⁹ This last definition suggests that μεσίτης has a similar meaning to ἑγγυος. The difference between the two is that the μεσίτης is the one who establishes a covenant between two parties, while the ἑγγυος assures its continuance.¹⁴⁰ Ellingworth points out that the agreement between God and humanity is not mutual but a unilateral gift of God; Jesus is an intermediary from God to humanity.¹⁴¹ The fact that Jesus stands between two parties, God and humanity, suggests that Jesus identifies with both and that he has particular concern for humanity. Jesus’ effectiveness as a mediator is indicated by the fact that the new covenant is established on better promises (κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις; 8:6), which include the promise of an eternal inheritance (9:15). This legal metaphor thus reinforces the author’s characterization of Jesus as reliable. This new covenant is enacted by Jesus’ own death (9:15–17), thus demonstrating Jesus’ selflessness in laying down his life for the benefit of others. In 12:24 it is likely that the author intends to make a synkrisis between Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, who stood trembling at the foot of Mount Sinai (12:21), and Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, who is situated atop the heavenly Mount Zion.

Minister

In 8:2 he is described as a “minister [λειτουργός] in the sanctuary [τῶν ἁγίων] and the true tent.” The noun λειτουργός, with its cognate words λειτουργέω and λειτουργία, originally had a political connotation referring to public service to the people. The word later took on a religious meaning connoting service in a religious cultus. This latter meaning is

¹³⁹ Becker, “μεσίτης,” *NIDNTT* 1:373.

¹⁴⁰ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 388; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 271–72.

¹⁴¹ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 410.

the predominant use in the Bible. The LXX uses the word group to refer frequently to the service of priests and Levites in the sacrificial cultus.¹⁴² This usage is also found in the book of Hebrews for the ministry of Moses (9:21) and priests (10:11). Since Jesus is identified as high priest, it is natural that the author also uses these words to refer to Jesus' ministry (8:2, 6).¹⁴³ However, Jesus has a superior ministry (8:6) that takes place in a superior tabernacle, heaven (8:2).¹⁴⁴

Shepherd

Finally, in the postscript Jesus is called the "great shepherd [ποιμήν] of the sheep" (13:20). Shepherd imagery of course is quite common in the OT. It was naturally used literally of herdsmen, who were responsible for the guidance, nurture, and protection of flocks, but it was also used figuratively of earthly rulers¹⁴⁵ or even of God.¹⁴⁶ In the NT it came to be used of spiritual caregivers¹⁴⁷ and of Jesus himself.¹⁴⁸ In both the OT and NT, people are often described as sheep who are lost, scattered or in need of a shepherd.¹⁴⁹ The author's application of the shepherd metaphor to Jesus characterizes him as one who has great leadership ability and one who cares for the security and welfare of his people. The adjective

¹⁴² For λειτουργία see: Exod 37:19 Num 4:24, 27, 28, 33; 7:5, 7, 8; 8:22, 25; 16:9; 18:4, 6, 7, 21, 23, 31; 1 Chr 6:17, 33; 9:13, 19, 28; 23:24, 26, 28; 24:3, 19; 28:13, 20–21; 2 Chr 8:14; 31:2, 4, 16; 35:10, 15, 16; Sir 50:14, 19; 2 Macc 4:14; cf. Luke 1:23; for λειτουργός see: Isa 61:6; 2 Esd 20:40; Sir 7:30. See K. Hess, "λειτουργέω," *NIDNTT* 3:551; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 217.

¹⁴³ According to Lane, the "term λειτουργός is here virtually equivalent to ἀρχιερέυς, 'high priest,' but emphasizes the cultic rather than the official aspect of the office. It implies activity (cf. 7:25), and not merely status" (*Hebrews*, 1:205).

¹⁴⁴ The expression τῶν ἁγίων λειτουργός is actually quite ambiguous; it could mean "minister of the saints" or "minister of the holy things" (Westcott, *Hebrews*, 216; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 133), but since the author will proceed to talk about the sanctuary in the following chapters (9:1–3, 8, 12, 24–25; 10:19; 13:11), "sanctuary" is the best translation here.

¹⁴⁵ E.g., Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; 1 Chr 11:2; 17:6; Ps 78:71–72; Isa 44:28; Jer 3:15; 10:21; 23:1–4; 50:6; Ezek 34:2–10, 23; 37:24; Mic 5:4–6; Nah 3:18; Zech 10:3. Apparently, it had the same connotation in Greek literature. Aristotle writes: "The friendship of a king for his subjects is one of superiority in beneficence; for a king does good to his subjects, inasmuch as being good he studies to promote their welfare, as a shepherd studies the welfare of his sheep; hence Homer called Agamemnon 'shepherd of the people'"; see *Nichomachean Ethics* 8.11.1 (Rackham, LCL).

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Gen 48:15; 49:24; Pss 23:1; 28:9; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11–22, 31; Mic 7:14.

¹⁴⁷ John 21:15–17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2–3.

¹⁴⁸ John 10:1–16, 26–27; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., 2 Sam 24:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; 1 Chr 21:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Ps 44:11, 22; Isa 53:6; Jer 50:17; Mic 2:12; Zech 10:2; Matt 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; Mark 6:34; Acts 20:29.

“great” (μέγαν) implies that Jesus is superior to all other shepherds. DeSilva insightfully observes:

Although the metaphor has changed, the author still reinforces the trajectory developed in 2:10, as well as 6:19–20; 10:19–20; 12:2. Jesus as shepherd goes ahead of the flock, leading them and calling them toward their final destiny, even as he, in the role of pioneer, is seen blazing the trail of the many children who follow, or the consecrated hosts who are entering God’s realm by means of the way he opened up.¹⁵⁰

Some scholars believe that in this passage there are echoes of Isa 63:11–14 which describes Moses as a shepherd who led the Israelites out of Egypt.¹⁵¹ If so, this passage implies Jesus’ role as a deliverer of God’s people, much as Moses was. This suggestion is reinforced by the allusion to Zech 9:11, “by the blood of the eternal covenant” (ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης αἰωνίου), which celebrated God’s restoration of the exiles. The author gives the striking image of the shepherd whom God has raised from the dead. The image alludes to the ultimate sacrifice that a shepherd can make for his sheep: the laying down of his own life.

SPEECH/UTTERANCES

As noted in chapter two a person’s speech is one of the most important means for revealing character in literature. In chapter three we noted that in the rhetorical handbooks, some authors identified speech as one of the important properties or attributes of the person.¹⁵² The author of Hebrews also reveals Jesus’ character through his speech. However, he does this in a unique way by taking passages from Scripture and attributing them directly to Jesus as if he had spoken them. As noted in the previous chapter these Scripture quotations are a type of prosopopoeia or ethopoeia. In these instances, however, the author did not have to “invent” the speech; he simply took the words of Scripture, which may have originally belonged to a different person and context, and placed them into the mouth of Jesus. By analyzing the quotations put into the mouth of Jesus we can partially reconstruct how the author of Hebrews conceived Jesus’ character.

¹⁵⁰ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 512.

¹⁵¹ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 251; Sowers, *Hermeneutics of Philo*, 119; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:561; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 9. Williamson rejects this allusion; the image of Jesus as shepherd was commonplace (*Philo*, 481–82).

¹⁵² Theon, *Progymnasmata* 78; Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.34, 36; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 5.10.28.

The first three quotations attributed to Jesus are found in Heb 2:12–13. The first quotation in Heb 2:12 is taken from Ps 21:23 LXX. The prescript of the psalm identifies David as the presumed author. The psalm begins with an extended lamentation. The psalmist complains to God that he has abandoned him in his time of need. It appears that the psalmist is suffering from some deathly illness or torture and that his enemies are rejoicing over his impending death as they plot to divide up his earthly possessions. He has prayed to God for deliverance, but God does not answer. The gospel writers record that Jesus uttered the opening line of the psalm in his cry of dereliction as he hung upon the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”¹⁵³

Verses 7–19 of the psalm find numerous echoes in the crucifixion accounts of all four canonical gospels as the psalmist describes the mocking of his adversaries who surround him, the physical suffering, the thirst, the piercing of the hands and feet, the dividing of his garments, and the casting of lots for his clothing. It is clear that early on the psalm became associated with Jesus within the Christian church, so it is not surprising that the author of Hebrews would readily identify Jesus as the one speaking this psalm.

After a prayer for deliverance in verses 20–22, the psalm then adopts a decidedly hopeful tone. The psalmist affirms that God does hear the cries of the afflicted and does deliver them. It is likely that the psalmist has finally received an answer to his prayer and has experienced deliverance from his perilous situation. The psalmist praises God in the midst of the assembly and he calls upon all the earth to worship and praise the Lord. Despair and anguish in the first part of the psalm give way to hope and exultation in the second part. The psalm in its two parts seems to parallel the two stages of Jesus’ existence, who in his incarnation experienced suffering and death, but then he was exalted with glory and honor. Is it any wonder why the author of Hebrews chose this quotation as befitting Jesus? The author chose the very verse in which the despair of the psalmist yields to praise and thanksgiving.

Noting that the quotation is appropriate to the situation of Jesus, we may observe several things that it reveals about Jesus’ character. First, we may note what the quotation expresses about Jesus’ relationship with humanity. Jesus demonstrates his willingness to identify with humanity. The key word is “brothers,” ἀδελφοίς, which ties in with the introduction

¹⁵³ Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34.

to the quotation, he “is not ashamed to call them brothers” (2:12).¹⁵⁴ The quotation also anticipates 2:17 which states that Jesus “had to become like his brothers” in all things. The primary purpose for the quotation, then, is to indicate Jesus’ solidarity with humanity, and in particular, the community of believers. But we may infer other things about Jesus’ character as well.

The quotation expresses Jesus’ extraordinary devotion to God; he proclaims God’s name and sings hymns to him. The first verb, ἀπαγγεῶ, is used instead of διηγῆσομαι which is found in the LXX. It is impossible to know whether the author of Hebrews substituted the word, or whether it was in fact found in the version he was using. But, as Harold Attridge notes, the term is “better suited to emphasize Christ’s mission.”¹⁵⁵ Jesus was a bold witness on behalf of God during his lifetime. The use of the verb ἀπαγγεῶ may also suggest that Jesus is the superior messenger to the angels (ἄγγελος).¹⁵⁶ Tetley states, “It may be that this is a subtle reinforcement of the argument that it is Jesus rather than the angels who communicates the nature and character (‘name’) of God.”¹⁵⁷

In the second half of the quotation, Jesus sings hymns (ὕμνησω) to God in the midst of the congregation. The word for “congregation” or “assembly” here is ἐκκλησία, which is also the word for “church” in the NT. Jesus proclaimed God in various assemblies, whether it was in synagogues, or in the temple precincts, or on the hillsides and by the shores of Galilee. As Koester remarks, “Jesus exemplifies the kind of bold proclamation and praise that Hebrews insists should characterize all Christian assemblies.”¹⁵⁸ The fact that Jesus leads the congregation in the worship and praise of God suggests his leadership role within the Christian church. Johnson surmises that this passage hints at Christ’s role as high priest.¹⁵⁹

The next two quotations in Heb 2:13 are likely taken from the same passage, Isa 8:17–18 LXX. Although the first of the two quotations also finds echoes in Isa 12:2 and 2 Sam 22:3, the fact that the second of the two quotations is clearly taken from Isa 8 strongly suggests that the first is as well. The author of Hebrews, however, separates the Isaiah passage into two quotations by inserting καὶ πάλιν, “and again,” between verses 17 and 18.

¹⁵⁴ The NRSV adds “and sisters,” which certainly expresses the intent of the author, but for the purposes of analysis, I wanted to focus on the literal translation.

¹⁵⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas, “Old Testament,” 306; Tetley, “Priesthood,” 121.

¹⁵⁷ Tetley, “Priesthood,” 121.

¹⁵⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 238.

¹⁵⁹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 99.

This phrase is not found in the LXX version of Isaiah. The phrase καὶ πάλιν also occurs between the quotations from Ps 21:23 LXX and Isa 8:17 LXX. It is simply the author's way of linking a series of quotations together. He does the same thing, for example, in 1:5 and in 10:30 where he links Scripture quotations in these places as well. Why then does the author of Hebrews separate the quotation from Isaiah in this way? It appears that the author wants to convey two different points with each portion of the quotation.

Chapters 7 and 8 of Isaiah take place during the time of Ahaz when Israel and Syria threaten to destroy the nation of Judah. In chapter 7, Isaiah takes his son, Shear-jashub, "a remnant will remain," and confronts Ahaz, admonishing him to trust in God. Isaiah offers the sign of the birth of a child, Immanuel; before the child is old enough to choose between good and evil, both Israel and Syria will be destroyed. In chapter 8, Isaiah continues to prophesy of the impending destruction of Syria and Israel at the hands of Assyria. Isaiah's wife gives birth to a son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, "Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey." Before the child even learns to speak, both Damascus and Samaria will be destroyed. In vivid imagery, Isaiah depicts Assyria as the great river Euphrates, which will soon overflow its banks and flood even as far as the nation of Judah (8:6–8). God tells Isaiah not to fear what is about to happen; instead he should fear the Lord (8:12–13). But for the people of Israel and Judah, God will become a stumbling stone and a snare (8:14–15). In verse 16, then, Isaiah commands that his testimony be sealed among his disciples. Many scholars believe that Isaiah commands that his oracles be sealed and entrusted to his disciples until a future time when his prophecies would be vindicated. It appears that Isaiah withdraws from public ministry until after the death of Ahaz because his message has been rejected. But Isaiah confesses his trust in God and exclaims that he will wait for the Lord to reveal himself again. In the meantime, Isaiah places confidence in the signs that God has given him that God continues to work among his people. Even while Isaiah is silent, he and his children, Shear-jashub, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, and possibly Immanuel, remain as witnesses to the veracity of Isaiah's message.

In their immediate contexts, both Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:8 employ Isa 8:14–15 in order to refer to Jesus as a stumbling block to faith. So, it appears that the author of Hebrews was utilizing a passage of Scripture that was deemed messianic by the early church, but as usual the author makes his own creative use of the passage. Incidents in the life of Isaiah may have suggested parallels to the life of Jesus. Even as Isaiah's message

was rejected and later vindicated, so also Jesus would be vindicated after he was rejected. Even though it is Isaiah speaking in the original context, the words are now put on the lips of Jesus in Hebrews.

The first quotation in 2:13 only cites the very last part of the LXX version of Isa 8:17. There are two significant differences in the text in Hebrews compared to the LXX. First, the emphatic pronoun ἐγώ is added. Thomas suggests that this change emphasizes that Jesus is the speaker.¹⁶⁰ Second, ἔσομαι and πεποιθώς are inverted, thus making a closer connection of πεποιθώς with ἐπ' αὐτῷ, that is, God, who is the object of his trust.¹⁶¹ Ellingworth notes that the rare periphrastic future employed here implies a durative meaning; a state or period of trust is in view, rather than a single act.¹⁶² Jesus is characterized as one who continually puts his trust in God. In this respect, Jesus identifies with believers in their trust and reliance upon God. As Thompson puts it, "the Son is expressing solidarity with the community that is challenged to trust in God when it cannot see God's triumph."¹⁶³

DeSilva takes the unique position that the quotation indicates that Jesus puts his trust not in God, but in his fellow believers.¹⁶⁴ Jesus demonstrates further his solidarity with fellow believers by placing his trust in them. If deSilva is right, this trust would certainly be quite indicative of Jesus' identification with humanity. However, two factors seem to counter deSilva's interpretation. First, in the original context the trust is directed towards God, not human beings. An audience familiar with the passage would naturally assume that the quotation was used to evince Jesus' trust in God. If the author intended the reference to refer to humanity, the allusion is overly subtle—so much so, that the allusion has been entirely lost on all other commentators of the passage. Second, if humanity was in view in this passage, one would expect the use of a plural pronoun (αὐτοῖς), rather than the singular (αὐτῷ). Within the immediate context (2:10–14), plural nouns (υἱούς, οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι, ἀδελφούς, ἀδελφοίς, τὰ παιδία) and pronouns (αὐτούς) are used exclusively for human beings.

The next quotation, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me," originally referred to Isaiah and his children who were signs to their generation. However, the author has truncated the quotation from Isaiah

¹⁶⁰ Thomas, "Old Testament," 306.

¹⁶¹ Thomas, "Old Testament," 306.

¹⁶² Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 129.

¹⁶³ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 74.

¹⁶⁴ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 116.

8:18 LXX, thus allowing the quotation to be placed into a new context. The quotation contributes to the characterization of Jesus' solidarity with humanity, but it makes additional contributions to Jesus' characterization. The "children" (τὰ παῖδιά) mentioned here are not Jesus' own children, but fellow believers who are children of God by virtue of their connection with Jesus. Lane suggests that the family imagery in this verse evokes "an intimacy of relationship and a tenderness that broadens the concept of solidarity."¹⁶⁵ As part of the same family, the author of Hebrews tells us in verse 14 that Jesus also partook of the same flesh and blood as his fellow believers.

Moreover, Jesus states that the children have been given (ἐδόκεν) to him. Jesus, the one who exemplified trust in God, is now in turn entrusted with God's children to care for them.¹⁶⁶ God has deemed Jesus trustworthy to help. The author of Hebrews picks up this theme of Jesus' trustworthiness in 3:1–6 when he states that Jesus was faithful as a Son over God's household. Just in chapter 2 alone the author of Hebrews identifies the numerous ways in which Jesus benefits the children of God: he tasted death for everyone (2:9), he sanctified them (2:11), he rendered the devil powerless over death (2:14), he delivered them from the fear of death (2:15), and he made atonement for the sins of the people (2:17).

The next Scripture quotation attributed to Jesus is found in 10:5–7, which is taken from Ps 39:7–9 LXX. David is again the presumed author of this psalm. Scholars recognize that this psalm consists of two parts. Verses 2–11 are a thanksgiving for God's deliverance, while verses 12–18 are a lament or a prayer for deliverance from affliction. It is virtually the reverse of what we find in Ps 21 LXX. Scholars, such as Artur Weiser and Peter Craigie, who hold to the basic unity of the psalm, posit that the psalmist's experience of deliverance in the past forms the foundation for the psalmist's confident petition in the midst of the present crisis.¹⁶⁷ The quotation used in Hebrews is embedded in the thanksgiving portion of the psalm.

In the opening line of the psalm, the psalmist indicates that God answered his prayer and delivered him from the pit of destruction and the miry clay and placed him upon solid footing once again. He praises God and expresses the blessedness of trusting in him. In verse 7 the psalmist

¹⁶⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:60.

¹⁶⁶ Gray claims that διδωμι "can mean simply, 'to entrust to one's care,' as if to an appointed guardian" ("Brotherly Love," 340).

¹⁶⁷ Weiser, *Psalms*, 333–34; Craigie, *Psalms*, 314.

indicates that God is not pleased with sacrifices: "Sacrifice and offering you do not desire. . . . Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required." In verse 9, the psalmist proclaims, "I delight to do your will, O my God." This section of the psalm could be aptly summed up by Samuel's declaration to Saul, "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam 15:22). Verse 9 concludes with the statement, "your law is within my heart." Thus, this portion of the psalm fits nicely within Hebrews' overall argument in chapters 8–10 in which the author asserts the obsolescence of the Levitical sacrificial system in view of Christ's perfect sacrifice, and by the fact that this section is framed nicely by the quotation from Jer 38 LXX which proclaims the new covenant and the law that God will write upon the hearts of his followers.¹⁶⁸

In Hebrews, this psalm of David's is now put into the mouth of Jesus. As Lightfoot expresses it, the "psalm is conceived of as being a kind of conversation between the eternal Son and God the Father, with the Son as the speaker."¹⁶⁹ The author introduces the quotation with the comment, "when He comes into the world" (εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον), alluding to Jesus' incarnation. The second line of the quotation is considerably different from the MT. The Hebrew literally says somewhat oddly, "My ears you have dug."¹⁷⁰ This phrase evidently connotes that God bore out holes in the side of the head, creating ears that can hear and respond in obedience to God. This connotation would align well with the affirmation of obedience in verse 8 of the psalm. However, the Hebrews quotation is based on the LXX translation which reads, "a body you have prepared for me." F. F. Bruce surmises that the LXX translator regarded "ears" as an instance of synecdoche, equating the digging out of the ears with the fashioning of a human body.¹⁷¹ The LXX translation fortuitously enables the author of Hebrews to view this quotation as a reference to Jesus' incarnation.

¹⁶⁸ The quotation of Jer 38:31–34 LXX is found in Heb 8:8–12 and 10:16–17.

¹⁶⁹ Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 185.

¹⁷⁰ אָזְנִים כָּדָרָה לִּי.

¹⁷¹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 240; so also, Walter C. Kaiser, "The Abolition of the Old Order and Establishment of the New: Psalm 40:6–8 and Hebrews 10:5–10," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (eds. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981), 29. Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 500) believes that the variant arose from a misreading of the Greek text: ΗΘΕΛΗΣΑΣΩΤΙΑ was misread as ΗΘΕΛΗΣΑΣ(Σ)ΩΜΑ, but this explanation fails to account for the change in verb. Jobs claims that the change was intentionally made by the author of Hebrews to create a paronomasia, a rhetorical device designed to reinforce his argument ("Paronomasia," 188–89). However, since this reading is found in the major versions (B, S, A) of the LXX available to us, it is more likely that the author was simply interpreting the text that was available to him.

The purpose of the incarnation is so that Jesus can present his own body as the final sacrificial offering to replace the multiple offerings of the Levitical sacrificial cultus. This becomes clear in the author's exposition of the psalms passage in verses 8–9. What we learn about Jesus' character in this passage is that Jesus willingly laid down his life as a sacrifice. Attridge notes that the verb, ἐβουλήθη, found in Ps 39:9 LXX, is missing in 10:7; this omission "effects a closer connection between the speaker's coming and the expressed intent to do God's will, a connection that will be emphasized" in verse 9.¹⁷² Jesus' obedience is exemplified by his incarnation and the subsequent offering of his body for sacrifice. Johnson notes that "the faithful obedience that is the essence of Christ's priesthood is also the essence of his character, not only at his death, although that is its final and perfect expression, but also from the first moment of his human existence."¹⁷³

In only one other place does Jesus "speak" in Hebrews. In 5:7 it says that Jesus entreated and supplicated (δεήσεις καὶ ἱκετηρίας) God with "loud cries and tears." In this instance, the author does not provide a quotation containing the specific words of Jesus' prayers. Consequently, we will consider this passage under the next section dealing with Jesus' actions.

ACTIONS/EVENTS

One of the most important means for discerning character is the examination of a person's actions or deeds. As we saw when we considered the encomiastic topics, deeds are one of the most crucial elements in discerning the goods of the mind or virtues of a given person. Aristotle explains that "we praise just men and brave men, in fact good men and virtue generally, because of their actions and the results they produce."¹⁷⁴ Numerous deeds and actions are attributed to Jesus in Hebrews. It will be helpful to put these deeds in a roughly chronological order in the manner suggested by Petersen and Boring.¹⁷⁵ A strict chronological framework is impossible since many of the deeds occur simultaneously. By constructing a roughly chronological order, however, we can reconstruct part of the "story world" behind the book of Hebrews. Naturally, part of the story

¹⁷² Attridge, *Hebrews*, 274; see also Jobes, "Paronomasia," 189.

¹⁷³ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 250.

¹⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.12.2 (Rackham, LCL).

¹⁷⁵ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 48; Boring, "Narrative Dynamics," 23–24.

world of the book also includes the stories of the OT (e.g., 3:1–4:11; 5:4; 6:13–15; 7:1–10; 9:1–7, 18–22; 11:1–40; 12:16–24), as well as the story world of the community to which the author was writing (2:3; 5:11–12; 6:9–10; 10:32–34; 12:4; 13:3, 7, 17–19, 22–24), but here we are only concerned with the events surrounding Jesus' life to see what they reveal about his character. This reconstruction will include both actions done *by* Jesus and actions or events that happen *to* Jesus. As mentioned in chapter three, Cicero includes both *achievements* and *accidents* as sources for praise material,¹⁷⁶ and by considering both here together a more complete picture of the story world pertaining to Jesus emerges. Every action and event involving Jesus has the potential for revealing something about Jesus' character. We will begin by reconstructing the big picture of Jesus' life, before examining each one of the actions and events in detail.

Jesus existed in his preexistent state as the "reflection" (or "radiance") of God's glory and the "exact imprint" of his being (1:3). In his preexistent state, Jesus was involved in the creation of the world (1:10), an activity he shared with God (1:2). He sustains all things by his powerful word (1:3). Jesus entered into the world (9:26; 10:5), being made lower than the angels (2:9), becoming like other humans (2:17), and partaking of flesh and blood (2:14). He was the agent of God's revelation (1:2) as he preached the message of salvation (2:3; cf. 1:2), proclaimed God's name, and sang praises to him (2:12). He trusted in God (2:13) and did his will (10:7, 9). He was tempted in every way as humans are, yet without sin (2:18; 4:15). He prayed to God with loud cries and tears (5:7). Jesus' suffering was the means for him to learn obedience (5:8) and to be perfected (2:10; cf. 5:9). Jesus endured hostility (12:3) and reproach (11:26; 13:13) and suffered the pains of death (2:9, 14; 9:15, 26), "outside the city gate" (13:12), on a cross (12:2). His death was understood as an offering of himself (7:27; 9:14, 25, 28; 10:10) and as a sacrifice (9:26; 10:12) through the shedding of his blood (9:12, 14; 12:24; 13:12). His death was the means of salvation (5:9; 7:25) and redemption (9:12, 15), by bearing (9:28), cleansing (1:3), removing (9:26), and atoning (2:17) for sins and cleansing consciences (9:14), thus destroying the power of the devil (2:14), and releasing humanity from the fear of death (2:15). He takes hold of humanity (2:16), helping to lead them to glory (2:10) through a new and living way which he inaugurated (10:20), and giving them an eternal inheritance (9:15). He perfects (10:14) and sanctifies (2:11; 10:10; 13:12) them. Jesus was raised from the dead (13:20), and he entered into the heavenly

¹⁷⁶ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24:36.

realm (4:14; 6:19–20; 9:11–12, 24), where he appeared before God (9:24). Jesus was crowned with glory and honor (2:9), was anointed beyond his companions (1:9), became heir of all things (1:2), inherited a greater name than the angels (1:4), and was worshiped by them (1:6). He now sits at the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), where he is victorious over his enemies (1:13; 10:13) and all things are put into subjection to him (2:8). Simultaneously with his enthronement, Jesus was also appointed as high priest (3:1–2; 5:5–6, 10; 6:20; 9:11; cf. 7:16, 21), making him the mediator of a new covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24; cf. 7:22). He gives help to humanity (2:18), sympathizes with their weaknesses (4:15), and intercedes for them (7:25). He is a servant (or minister) of the saints and of the true tabernacle and heavenly things (8:2–6). At some point Jesus will appear again for salvation to those who eagerly await him (9:28).

Note that the author is selective about which events in Jesus' earthly life he chooses to mention. Apart from his death on a cross, we are given very little precise detail about Jesus' earthly life. The author does not talk about Jesus' teaching, preaching, or healing ministry, nor does he mention specific events such as the entry into Jerusalem or the cleansing of the temple. What information the author does give us is in a rather general way, for example, he was tempted or he suffered. Thus, the author of Hebrews selected only those details about Jesus' earthly existence that were relevant for his argument.

A second thing to note is that Jesus' actions extend from his pre-earthly existence to his post-earthly existence. Thus, Jesus' capacity for action extends beyond the normal human life span. In an encomium, one normally can only praise a person's deeds up to the point of his or her death, but for Jesus the author can praise his deeds before his incarnation and even beyond his death.

Theon describes what kinds of actions are praiseworthy. Some of these kinds of actions are applicable to the life of Jesus. First, Theon says that fine actions

are those done for others rather than ourselves . . . and in which the toil is that of the doer but the benefit is common; and through which the populace experiences benefits . . . Actions are praised on the basis of the occasion and whether someone did them alone or was the first or when no one else acted, or did more than others or with few helpers or beyond what was characteristic of his age or contrary to expectation or with toils or because they were done very easily or quickly.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Theon, *Progymnasmata* 110 (Kennedy).

Many of Jesus' actions listed above were done for others, rather than for himself. His actions brought salvation to humanity, and Jesus continues to act on behalf of humanity, interceding for them and helping them. His actions were done under extraordinary circumstances and were beyond expectations. Thus, we see that Jesus' actions were praiseworthy on many accounts. Let us consider the events of Jesus' life in greater detail.

He Created the World

The author of Hebrews indicates that God made the world through Jesus (1:2). The word for "world" here is αἰών, which usually has a temporal dimension and is often used to express limitless time in the future, that is, eternity (1:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 13:8, 21), but it can also express an unspecified length of time, hence "age" (9:26). The author envisions a coming future age (6:5). The word αἰών sometimes connotes the material "world," although the temporal aspect is probably still retained.¹⁷⁸ The author of Hebrews declares that God has created the world or "ages" (11:3) through the agency of his Son Jesus (1:2). In this respect the author shows affinities with other NT writers who view Jesus as the agent of creation (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16).¹⁷⁹ In 1:10 the quotation from Ps 101:26–28 LXX, which originally referred to God, is now placed in the mouth of God speaking about his Son. Jesus was present at the very beginning (κατ' ἀρχάς) to lay the foundations of the earth. The metaphor suggests that Jesus was involved in the initial acts of creation. Jesus is thus seen as a co-creator with his father. Allen rightly remarks that "it is impossible not to see in the Son's agency in the creation of the universe a statement of his eternal preexistence" and it implies his divinity as well.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Vaughan remarks, "The thought of duration is never wholly lost in the Scripture use of αἰών, though in this place, and in xi.3, . . . it is all but effaced. The world as *material* is κόσμος, the world as *temporal* is αἰών. . . . The plural . . . seems to suggest the idea not of *continuous* but of *aggregate* duration; the world as marked by *successive periods* of existence" (*Hebrews*, 5). Allen prefers the view that αἰών includes both the material universe and "the vast periods of time and all that transpires in them." He remarks: "To put it in contemporary scientific language, *aiōnes* includes the space-matter-time continuum that is the universe, the totality of all things existing in time and space. It seems best to include both the temporal and spatial idea in the term" (*Hebrews*, 111).

¹⁷⁹ Scholars also note echoes of wisdom literature in which Wisdom participates in the creation of the world: Prov 8:27–31; Wis 7:22, 27; 8:1; 9:2, 9. See, for example, Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:12; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 87–88; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 102; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 53–54.

¹⁸⁰ Allen, *Hebrews*, 111.

Jesus' work in creation is also in view in 1:10–12. The term τῶν χειρῶν "hands" in verse 10 is a metonymy referring to divine power.¹⁸¹ Jesus' eternity is emphasized in verse 11 where he is contrasted to the heavens and the earth which are likened to garments that wear out. Jesus' sovereignty over creation is underscored in verse 12. Jesus has the authority and ability to "roll up" the heavens and the earth, and to change them as one would change a garment.¹⁸² Hence, Jesus' immutability is contrasted with the mutability of the created order. The emphasis in Hebrews seems to be not so much on Jesus' creativity, but on his power to accomplish these things.

A couple of other passages may point to Jesus' creative activity. As already noted, a number of scholars believe that Jesus takes a role in the creation of the angels.¹⁸³ In its original context, the passage from Ps 103:4 LXX refers to God. But as we have seen, the author is not hesitant to apply to Jesus passages that originally referred to God. The substantival participle ὁ ποιῶν and the pronoun αὐτοῦ are both ambiguous and can refer to God or Jesus. Since God is the one who is speaking in Heb 1:7, it is quite conceivable to construe the verse as speaking about Jesus' creation of the angels.

Many scholars see an allusion to Jesus' creative activity in 3:3 where an analogy is used to illustrate Jesus' superiority to Moses: Jesus has greater glory than Moses, just as a builder (ὁ κατασκευάσας) has greater glory than the house he built. Many scholars believe that the builder in this verse refers to Jesus as the creator of the people of God, or even of Moses himself as part of the people of God.¹⁸⁴ Some scholars, on the other hand, in view of the statement in 3:4 that God is the builder of all things, identify

¹⁸¹ Allen, *Hebrews*, 183.

¹⁸² Buchanan surmises that the author of Hebrews may have been influenced by Isa 34:4 LXX which talks about the hosts of heaven wearing away and the sky being rolled up like a scroll (*To the Hebrews*, 22).

¹⁸³ Meier, "Symmetry," 512; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 226–27; Swetnam, "Hebrews 1," 60; Anderson, *King-Priest*, 155; McDonough, "Beginning," 204–5.

¹⁸⁴ Those who view the builder as Jesus include: McLean, *Hebrews*, 91; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 120; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 121; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 164; Davidson, *Hebrews*, 83; MacNeill, *Christology*, 39; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 42; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 29; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 171; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 104; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:67–68; Héring, *Hébreux*, 39; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 78–79; Hanson, "Christ in the Old Testament," 395; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 72; Williamson, *Philo*, 461–62; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 57–58; D'Angelo, *Moses*, 164, 168–74, 186–87; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 87–88; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 132; Morris, "Hebrews, 31–32"; Braun, *Hebräer*, 81; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 92; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 195–96; Son, *Zion*, 129; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 169; Asumang, *Unlocking*, 98; McDonough, "Beginning," 209; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 166. George Guthrie seems to want to press a direct correlation in the analogy: "The inference to which the analogy points is that Jesus, as God, has made Moses, a member of the people of Israel, and as Creator is worthy of more honor and glory than one of his creatures" (*Hebrews*, 128).

God as the builder.¹⁸⁵ Others claim that the distinction between Jesus and God cannot be distinguished in these verses.¹⁸⁶ It is likely that the analogy should not be pressed; Attridge protests that “Hebrews is not suggesting that Jesus is the builder of the house, and certainly not that the ‘house’ is Moses or any of the possible items that can be symbolized by the term, such as the people of God or the church.”¹⁸⁷ Jesus’ governance is implied in 3:5–6 where a brief synkrisis highlights Jesus’ superiority: while Moses was faithful as a servant *in* (ἐν) his house, Jesus was faithful as a Son *over* (ἐπί) his house. The phrase ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ suggests that Jesus functions as a steward over the people of God.¹⁸⁸

He Sustains/Bears All Things

In 1:3 the author expands upon Jesus’ role in creation by stating that he “bears” (φέρων) all things by the “word of his power” (τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ).¹⁸⁹ The verb φέρω here has several possible nuances:¹⁹⁰ (1) to “sustain, uphold, preserve”¹⁹¹—this interpretation would convey a similar idea to Col 1:17, “in him all things hold together”; (2) to “guide, rule, govern”;¹⁹² (3) to “bear towards a goal”;¹⁹³ or (4) to “produce, bring into being, create.”¹⁹⁴ The fourth option is rare and is unlikely since it would

¹⁸⁵ E.g., Westcott, *Hebrews*, 77; Williamson, *Philo*, 461; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 100; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:72, 77; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 39; Brett R. Scott, “Jesus’ Superiority over Moses in Hebrews 3:1–6,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 206; Allen, *Hebrews*, 244.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., Wilson, *Hebrews*, 70; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 92–93; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 110; see also Craddock, “Hebrews,” 46; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 82; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 140; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 132.

¹⁸⁸ See the article by Scott C. Layton, who adduces examples from the OT to suggest that this phrase indicates stewardship “Christ over His House (Hebrews 3.6) and Hebrew אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַבַּיִת.” *NTS* 37 (1991): 473–77.

¹⁸⁹ It is unlikely that αὐτοῦ refers to God (*contra* MacNeill, *Christology*, 60). Jesus appears to be the subject for all of the verbals in verse 3. Some older commentators read here the reflexive αὐτοῦ, which is certainly possible, but it does not substantially change the meaning; see Stuart, *Hebrews*, 271; Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:38.

¹⁹⁰ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 100; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:72; Koester, *Hebrews*, 181.

¹⁹¹ Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:62; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 45; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 100–101; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 35.

¹⁹² E.g., Buchanan says “the Son has authority over everything since he is given legal authority and is supported in everything he does, ‘by the word of [God’s] power’” (*To the Hebrews*, 7–8); cf. Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 35; David J. MacLeod, “The Finality of Christ: An Exposition of Hebrews 1:1–4,” *BSac* 162 (2005): 222–23.

¹⁹³ E.g., F. F. Bruce says Jesus “upholds the universe not like Atlas supporting a dead weight on his shoulders, but as one who carries all things forward on their appointed course” (*Hebrews*, 49); see also Westcott, *Hebrews*, 13–14; Morris, “Hebrews,” 14.

¹⁹⁴ Moffatt supports this as a possibility in light of Philonic usage (*Hebrews*, 7–8). Gregory of Nyssa held this interpretation, according to Westcott (*Hebrews*, 14).

amount to saying the same thing as verse 2 and the present participle φέρων suggests ongoing activity. Interpreters often blur the line between the second and third options. It is probably best to see the word conveying a combination of the first three options.¹⁹⁵ The word δυνάμεως is best construed as an attributive genitive, thus making the expression τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ mean “his powerful word.”¹⁹⁶ Jesus is involved in both the creation and sustaining of the world. Allen observes that this statement indicates that Jesus is distinct from creation itself: “He exists apart from it. He is not dependent upon it, but it is dependent on him.”¹⁹⁷ This clause therefore indicates Jesus’ authority and power in his providential sustenance and governance of the world.

He Entered into the World

The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus entered into the world (κόσμος; 10:5). The quotation that follows is taken from Ps 39:7–9 LXX. The words of the psalmist are now put into the mouth of Jesus. In its new context the psalm hints at Jesus’ incarnation: “but a body you have prepared for me” (10:5). The offering of Jesus’ body (10:10) will become a substitute for sacrifices and offerings which God neither desires nor takes pleasure in. Moreover, the quotation suggests Jesus’ willingness to take on a human body and to become a sacrifice. Not only does Jesus demonstrate his obedience to God, but he also shows his selflessness on behalf of all humanity. The quotation thus serves the means of amplification. Jesus not only offers his body willingly, and not out of compulsion, but he does it for the benefit of others. Another apparent reference to Jesus’ entry into the world is found in 9:26. Jesus was “manifested” (πεφανέρωται) to put away sin at the end of the age (ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων). Some scholars believe that the introductory formula in 1:6 is also an allusion to Jesus’ entry into the world, but it will be argued below that it is a reference to his exaltation, his entry into the heavenly world. While the author speaks of Jesus’ incarnation, he never speaks of Jesus’ birth.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 45–46; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:72–73; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:14; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 212; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 56–57.

¹⁹⁶ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 86–88.

¹⁹⁷ Allen, *Hebrews*, 124.

¹⁹⁸ Knox, “Divine Hero,” 234.

He Was Made Lower than the Angels

When Jesus entered into the world, he was made lower (ἡλαττωμένον) than the angels (2:9). The author of Hebrews has just quoted Ps 8:5–7 LXX, which originally referred to human beings in general. Psalm 8 could be described as a *hymn of praise* or more specifically a *psalm of creation*.¹⁹⁹ As the psalmist gazes in wonder at the starry heavens (v. 4), he contemplates the relative insignificance of humanity in the face of such a vast universe: what are human beings that God would even remember or pay attention to them? (v. 5). Yet, God not only remembers them, he places human beings in a prominent position in the hierarchy of the created order,²⁰⁰ and he bestows them “with glory and honor” (v. 6). God gives humanity dominion over all the animals of the earth (vv. 7–9). According to the psalmist human beings are the pinnacle of God’s creation. Human beings are made lower than the angels and are “crowned . . . with glory and honor” (2:7). The two lines of Ps 8:6 LXX originally were intended to be read synonymously to indicate the exalted status of humanity in the created order. The author of Hebrews, however, has reinterpreted the psalm christologically, so that the two lines are viewed as antithetical to one another. The being “made . . . lower than the angels” now refers to Jesus’ humiliation. The phrase βραχύ τι, the translation for the Hebrew adverb טַחַח, could be taken as an adverb for degree or time. In the original context of the psalm, the phrase is most likely one of degree. However, in the context of Hebrews 2, the phrase should be taken temporally. Jesus only temporarily takes a lower status than the angels, but he would

¹⁹⁹ Craigie, *Psalms*, 106.

²⁰⁰ A major *crux interpretum* of the psalm is the translation of the Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים. Although the plural noun is sometimes used to refer to a plurality of gods (Ps 96:5; Exod 18:11), the most natural understanding of the word in this context is *God*. However, many scholars prefer to translate the word as “angels,” “divine beings,” “heavenly beings,” or some other such designation; see e.g., Charles Augustus Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (2 vols.; ICC; New York: Scribner’s, 1908–1909), 64; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1–50* (AB 16; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 51; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 183). A. A. Anderson is one such representative (*Psalms* 1:103):

[A] problem is caused by the Hebrew *elohim* which may mean ‘God’ . . . or ‘angels’ . . . The latter alternative is more likely, because the Psalmist had been at pains to stress the infinite greatness of God and the comparative insignificance of man. The first alternative would have the effect of practically contradicting the essence of verses 3–4, and therefore the comparison must be between man and the heavenly beings or God’s messengers who surround his throne.

The LXX certainly reflects this interpretation as it translates אֱלֹהִים as ἄγγελοι, and it is the LXX translation that is reflected in Hebrews.

eventually be crowned with glory and honor. This statement is one indication of Jesus' solidarity with humanity.

He Was Made Like Human Beings/Partook of Flesh and Blood

The author indicates that Jesus had to be made like human beings (2:14, 17). The totality of this likeness is emphasized by various expressions (παραπλησίως in 2:14; κατὰ πάντα and ὁμοιωθῆναι in 2:17). This similarity is not only an external likeness but includes mortal, human nature as well.²⁰¹ Jesus did this by partaking in "flesh and blood" (2:14),²⁰² a metonymic expression signifying human beings (Matt 16:17; Gal 1:16; Eph 6:12) and suggestive of frailty, weakness, and perishability (1 Cor 15:50). In 2:14 the author amplifies Jesus' character by indicating that Jesus took on human flesh willingly. The causal clause (ἐπεὶ) demonstrates that the reason Jesus took on human flesh was to share in the same condition as fellow human beings, while the purpose clause (ἵνα) indicates that Jesus took on flesh in order that he might be able to overcome the power of the devil through his own death. The two verbs, *κεκοινώνηκεν* ("share") and *μετέσχευ* ("share, partake"), amount to the same thing, but some scholars have noted a distinction in the verb tenses. Bruce observes:

Such significant distinction as there is between the two forms lies in the tenses: "the children are sharers in (*κεκοινώνηκεν*, perfect) flesh and blood" in the sense that that is their original and natural state; human beings are per se creatures of flesh and blood. Our Lord, however, existed before his incarnation; "flesh and blood" form no essential part of his eternal being; but at a fixed point in time, by his own choice, "he also himself in like manner partook (*μετέσχευ*, aorist) of the same" and so began to share fully the nature of those whom he chose thus to redeem.²⁰³

A second purpose clause in verse 17 gives another reason for Jesus' partaking of human flesh: that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest who is able to offer an efficacious sacrifice for sins. Thus, Jesus also demonstrates selflessness in his willingness to partake of human flesh. In 7:13 the verb *μετέχω* is again used to designate Jesus' participation in the

²⁰¹ Julius Kögel, *Der Sohn und die Söhne: Eine exegetische Studie zu Hebräer 2,5–18* (BFCT 8,5–6; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1904), 74–75; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 24; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 156; Michel, *Hebräer*, 163.

²⁰² Literally, "blood and flesh" (αἷματος καὶ σαρκός).

²⁰³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 78n55; see also Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:60; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 171; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 99; Allen, *Hebrews*, 228.

tribe of Judah. This verb is never used of physical descent or relationship.²⁰⁴ Here again, the verb seems to imply Jesus' willingness to participate in human flesh.²⁰⁵

*He Was the Agent of God's Revelation/Shared the Message
of Salvation*

In 1:1–2 the author sets up an initial synkrisis between Jesus and the prophets.²⁰⁶ Four things are contrasted: (1) the manner of communication, (2) the time of communication, (3) the recipients of the message, and (4) the agents of communication. The opening pair of adverbs provides more than a rhetorical flourish; they indicate two aspects of the manner of communication. The adverb πολυμερῶς suggests that God spoke in many portions or parts, that is, the older revelation was partial, fragmentary, incomplete, and scattered over many centuries.²⁰⁷ None of God's messengers were privy to the complete revelation of God's message. The adverb πολυτρόπως by contrast refers to the many modes of revelations that God used to communicate his message. Israel's Scriptures gives many examples of God communicating to humans through dreams and visions, auditions, Urim and Thummim, miracles, signs, theophanies, angelic visitations, prophecy, and so forth.²⁰⁸ More properly, the adverb suggests that God communicates through the prophets by means of oracles, stories, parables, commandments, promises, threats, exhortations, and so forth.²⁰⁹ By contrast, the author implies that God's complete revelation has now come in the singular revelation of his Son Jesus.

²⁰⁴ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 375.

²⁰⁵ Westcott, *Hebrews*, 184; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 120; Allen, *Hebrews*, 422.

²⁰⁶ Gene Smillie is probably correct that the author does not want to express contrast but continuity between the two ages of revelation; see "Contrast or Continuity in Hebrews 1:1–2?" *NTS* 51 (2005): 560. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of these two revelations invites comparison.

²⁰⁷ Ceslas Spicq elaborates: "Chaque prophète apporte une révélation propre. C'est ainsi, par exemple, que la révélation de la création fut faite au temps d'Adam, du Jugement à Hénoc et à Amos, de l'amour de Dieu à Osée, de sa sainteté à Isaïe, de la nouvelle alliance à Jérémie, de la loi et des sacrifices à Ezéchiel, de l'enfantement virginal et de la passion du Christ à Isaïe, du lieu de sa naissance à Michée, du temps de cet avènement à Daniel. . . . Dieu ne se révèle que progressivement à l'humanité. Il éduque peu à peu et enseigne Adam, les contemporains de Noë, d'Abraham, de Moïse, des prophètes, jusqu'à la révélation *finale* et complète de l'Évangile" (*Hébreux* 2:3).

²⁰⁸ W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 89; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:3; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 3.

²⁰⁹ Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 28; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 37.

God spoke long ago (πάλαι) in the past, but now speaks in the “last days” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν), an expression that suggests that the author conceived that he was living in the eschatological or messianic age.²¹⁰ That God has now communicated to the author and his readers in the “last days” suggests that his final revelation has now come in Jesus. The recipients of the divine communication in the past were the “fathers” (τοῖς πατράσιν), which strictly speaking refers to the patriarchs, but here in this context should be construed much more broadly to include the innumerable saints of Israel’s history. By contrast, God has now spoken to the author and his contemporary fellow believers (ἡμῖν).

Most importantly, the author contrasts the agents of divine revelation.²¹¹ Long ago God spoke “through the prophets,” which again here should be understood more broadly to include all messengers of divine revelation, including people like Moses (7:14; 8:5; 9:19) and David (4:7). In these last days, however, God has spoken through his Son (ἐν υἱῷ). Scholars have made much of the fact that “Son” appears here without an article.²¹² While it is reasonable for readers to supply an article (“the”) or preposition (“his”), it is likely that the anarthrous noun is used in a more nuanced sense to emphasize the character or status of God’s final messenger.²¹³ Unlike all previous messengers, God’s final revelation is conveyed through one who stands in a unique relationship to him: as “One who is Son.”²¹⁴ Jesus’

²¹⁰ The expression “last days” was often used in passages that were interpreted messianically (Gen 49:1, 10; Num 24:14, 17; Hos 3:5) in the early church or were used in eschatological contexts in both the LXX and NT (Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 25:19; 37:24; Mic 4:1; Dan 10:14; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1; Jas 5:3; 2 Pet 3:3).

²¹¹ Commentators are considerably divided over whether the preposition ἐν should be construed instrumentally or locally. Otto Michel, for example, favors the former option, arguing that ἐν corresponds to the Hebrew preposition בְּ, and is equivalent to the Greek preposition διὰ (*Hebräer*, 93). This view essentially sees the prophets as the instruments or tools of God’s revelation. Harald Hegermann, on the other hand, argues for the locative sense. He contends that Alexandrian Judaism developed the concept that the spirit of God enters into the prophet and speaks in the place of the prophetic person (*Hebräer*, 29). In this view, the prophets are seen as a dwelling of God’s spirit. Paul Ellingworth rightly remarks, though, that “the distinction cannot be pressed too sharply” (*Hebrews*, 92).

²¹² Some older commentators, like Franz Delitzsch (*Hebrews*, 42), claimed that the lack of an article indicated that υἱός was used like a proper name, but this is unlikely.

²¹³ E.g., see Lowrie, *Hebrews*, 3; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 4; Edmund J. Wolf, *Annotations on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and the Hebrews* (vol. 10 of *Lutheran Commentary*; New York: Christian Literature Co., 1897), 243; Moll, *Hebrews*, 25; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 5; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 39; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 11; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:64; Schenck, “Keeping,” 101; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 82; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 50; Allen, *Hebrews*, 104–5.

²¹⁴ This is Westcott’s phraseology (*Hebrews*, 7).

status as the Son of God conveys the idea that Jesus is the one who is most qualified to reveal God's word to humanity.

In his human state Jesus shared the message of salvation to his fellow human beings (2:3). The phrase ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι suggests that Jesus was the first one to spread this message of salvation. Jesus' message of salvation received a twofold verification. First, it was confirmed (ἐβεβαιώθη) by the original audience, that is, those who had heard Jesus in person (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων).²¹⁵ Second, God testified to the accuracy of Jesus' message through miraculous signs (σημεῖοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν) and gifts of the Holy Spirit (πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς; 2:4). Here we have a second example of divine testimony. Not only did God testify to Jesus' character through divine speech (1:5–13), but he also witnesses to Jesus through miraculous signs. Jesus is a reliable messenger of God's word of salvation.

Jesus' teaching may also be implied in 6:1. The NRSV translates τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον as "the basic teaching about Christ," but the Greek is actually more ambiguous than this translation lets on. The genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ can be taken objectively, the message about Christ, or subjectively, the message proclaimed by Christ. Attridge favors the latter reading:

The [objective genitive] is rendered unlikely by the lack of any explicit christological element in the following summary, which describes the contents of this "basic message." Hence, the phrase refers to the proclamation that Christ himself delivered. The phrase may allude to the same schematic view of the development of Christian preaching that was evident in 2:3.²¹⁶

Mitchell, on the other hand, disagrees: "As the author rarely refers to the historical Jesus, it is hard to imagine that he intends that they leave behind the teaching of Christ himself."²¹⁷ A similar expression (τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ), just used in 5:12, seems to favor the objective

²¹⁵ Vanhoye (*Situation du Christ*, 243; *Different Priest*, 97; cf. Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 17) argues that the announcement of salvation began, not in the public ministry of Jesus, but after his resurrection, for it was then that God made him *Lord* (see Acts 2:36). However, the title *Lord* is not restricted to the exalted Jesus; in 7:14 the title is used for the earthly Jesus. Most commentators construe this passage as referring to the proclamation begun in the ministry of the earthly Jesus; see e.g., von Soden, *Hebräerbrief*, 26; Héring, *Hébreux*, 29; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 82; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 79; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 68; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 27; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:39; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 85; Koester, *Hebrews*, 210; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 88; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 88.

²¹⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 162. See also the article by J. Clifford Adams, "Exegesis of Hebrews VI. 1f," *NTS* 13 (1967): 378–85.

²¹⁷ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 118; see also Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 29.

reading. Some scholars permit both interpretations since Hebrews seems to allow for the continuity between Jesus' message and his followers.²¹⁸ Most interpreters seem to favor the objective reading of the passage,²¹⁹ but the subjective reading cannot be ruled out entirely. This verse may be another allusion to elementary teachings that originated with Jesus himself, thus emphasizing again Jesus' reliability as God's messenger.

He Proclaimed God's Name/Sang Hymns to God

As we have seen, Jesus displays extraordinary devotion to God in 2:12. The first line indicates that Jesus boldly proclaimed (ἀπαγγεῖλω) God's name to his fellow human beings. The second line states that Jesus sings hymns (ὑμνήσω) to God in the midst of the congregation (ἐκκλησία). The two actions also express Jesus' solidarity with humanity by his willingness to share God's goodness with others and his willingness to participate in the worship of God within the Christian assembly.

He Trusted in/Obeyed God

Jesus also exemplifies a trusting relationship in God in 2:13. As seen above, the periphrastic future connotes a state or period of trust, rather than a single act. Jesus is one who continually puts his trust in God. In this act of trust Jesus also further demonstrates his solidarity with fellow believers by exemplifying the kind of trust that should characterize all believers. Moreover, Jesus demonstrates a willingness to do God's will (10:7, 9). Jesus' obedience is exemplified by his incarnation and the subsequent offering of his body for sacrifice.

He Experienced Temptation

The author of Hebrews also tells us that Jesus was tempted (πειράζω; 2:18; 4:15). The verb πειράζω can mean "test," as it does in 3:9 and 11:17, but with regard to Jesus it most likely means "tempt" since in 4:15 we are told that

²¹⁸ Craddock, "Hebrews," 70; Koester, *Hebrews*, 303–4; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 211n3.

²¹⁹ E.g., Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 146; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 73; Héring, *Hébreux*, 57; Braun, *Hebräer*, 157; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:229; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:333; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:131; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 335n36; Victor (Sung-Yul) Rhee, "Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 5:11–6:20," *JETS* 43 (2000): 84; Allen, *Hebrews*, 339. Cockerill rejects both the subjective and objective genitive interpretations and instead calls it a "genitive of description"; the meaning of the whole phrase then would be: "the elementary Christian message"; see Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 261 (especially note 34).

Jesus' temptation did not result in sin.²²⁰ Jesus' resistance to temptation must not be seen as simply a quality inherent to his divine nature but as something that involved real conflict and choices.²²¹ His sinlessness must be seen as a real achievement.²²² Jesus thus surpasses all human beings by virtue of the fact that he never yielded to temptation and hence was without sin. In this respect, he did what no other human being could do. Later, the author would describe Jesus as a holy, innocent, and undefiled high priest who is separated from sinners (7:26); he did not have to offer sacrifices for his own sins (7:27). Moreover, his experience of temptation was beneficial for other people. Jesus can sympathize with the weaknesses of

²²⁰ Scholars have debated over the nature of the temptation and sinlessness that Jesus experienced. First, the phrase καθ' ὁμοιότητα (literally, "according to likeness") can mean "in the same way as we are tempted" or "by reason of his likeness to us" (Morris, "Hebrews," 46; cf. D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 122; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 92; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 195). Either is possible in the context of Hebrews. The phrase κατὰ πάντα (NASB: "in all things"; NRSV: "in every respect") indicates the universality of his temptations (Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 65). The question arises, then, to what degree are Jesus' temptations similar to humanity's if Jesus was without sin? (χωρίς ἁμαρτίας). Scholars seem to consider two options generally: (1) Jesus was tempted like all humans, yet without sinning; (2) Jesus was tempted like all humans, except for temptations arising from previous sins. Some prefer the second option (Westcott, *Hebrews*, 108; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 59; Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Human Nature of Christ in Relation to Original Sin, with Special Reference to Its Soteriological Significance* [London: Epworth, 1962], 119), while others prefer the first option (Vos, "Priesthood," 583; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 92; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 269; Koester, *Hebrews*, 283–84); Morris says either option is possible ("Hebrews," 46). The first option seems preferable here. Buchanan oddly remarks that "This does not necessarily mean that he had never committed a moral offense in his life. Since the author presented Jesus as a high priest, he may have understood his crucifixion as an offering on the Day of Atonement to cleanse his own sins as well as those of the faithful, all of whom would have been made sinless or perfect" (*To the Hebrews*, 82). Ronald Williamson similarly argues "How could Jesus in any sense save sinners if he had not fully shared himself in the human condition, as the author of Hebrews insists he did, including actual participation in the experience of sinning?"; see "Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus," *ExpTim* 86 (1974): 7. For him, the phrase χωρίς ἁμαρτίας indicates the end of a process, not a permanent condition. Jesus acquired the quality of sinlessness, i.e., "he learned obedience" ("Sinlessness," 5). See also Timothy Winder's dissertation, "The Sacrificial Christology of Hebrews: A Jewish Christian Contribution to the Modern Debate about the Person of Christ" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leeds, 2005), 82–83 and passim, which also supports this view. It is hard to square this view with the general tenor of Hebrews which points to Jesus' sinlessness and the unblemished nature of his sacrificial death. See the criticisms of Peterson, *Perfection*, 188–90; Attridge (*Hebrews*, 141), Lane, (*Hebrews*, 1:115), Talbert (*Suffering*, 64) and O'Brien, (*Hebrews*, 184n175).

²²¹ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, li; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 94; Johnson, *Humanity*, 119; John L. Terveen, "Jesus in Hebrews: An Exegetical Analysis of the References to Jesus' Earthly Life in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), 118.

²²² MacNeill, *Christology*, 44.

his fellow human beings because he also experienced temptation (4:15).²²³ He is also able to come to the aid of those who are experiencing temptation (2:18) and his experience of temptation enabled him to become a merciful high priest (2:17). Jesus is set in contrast with other priests; they can deal gently with their fellow human beings because they themselves are beset with weaknesses (5:2), and furthermore they are obligated to offer sacrifices for their own sins (5:3; 7:27).

He Cried Out to God

In 5:7 we are told that Jesus “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death.”²²⁴ Here we have an instance of the author using vivid description (*ekphrasis*, or better, *diatyposis*) in order to construct the character of Jesus. The author may be alluding to a specific occasion in the earthly life of Jesus: “in the days of his flesh” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς). Many scholars detect an allusion to Gethsemane in this passage (Matt 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46).²²⁵ However, there are very few verbal connections

²²³ Marguerite Shuster insightfully remarks that “it is precisely Jesus’ difference from us, his sinlessness, rather than his similarity to us, that makes full sympathy possible”; see “The Temptation, Sinlessness, and Sympathy of Jesus: Another Look at the Dilemma of Hebrews 4:15,” in *Perspectives on Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett* (eds. Marguerite Shuster and Richard Muller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 207. Those who have resisted temptation are often resentful or contemptuous of those who have given in to the same temptation, but because Jesus is without sin he does not hold a grudge against humanity. Moreover, she notes that “participating in sin does not increase sympathy but dulls it by obscuring the idea of evil” (208). She concludes that “exactly because Jesus truly suffered and was truly tempted but was not finally deceived, he is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses and temptations . . . His sympathy . . . depends precisely upon his both being, and not being, a human being like us” (208).

²²⁴ The most thorough overview and analysis of the numerous interpretations of this passage is by Carlos Zesati Estrada, *Hebreos 5,7–8: Estudio historic-exegético* (AnBib 113; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990).

²²⁵ E.g., Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:213; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 184; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 178; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 68–69; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 66; Teodorico, *Ebrei*, 101–2; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:113; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 100; Héring, *Hébreux*, 39; Cullmann, *Christology*, 96; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 97–98; Michel, *Hebräer*, 220; André Feuillet, “L’évocation de l’agonie de Gethsemani dans l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *EsprVie* 86 (1976): 49–50; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 182; Peterson, *Perfection*, 86–92; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 129; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 136; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:215; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 190; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 200; Allen, *Hebrews*, 324. Other scholars deny any connection with Gethsemane (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:120; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 189–90; Koester, *Hebrews*, 107; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 76. Attridge points out a couple of problems with this suggestion: (1) none of the Synoptics report “loud crying and tears”; (2) it is unclear how his prayer for the cup to pass from him was heard (*Hebrews*, 148). See also Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 286), for additional problems.

with the Synoptic accounts. The passage may reflect an independent tradition,²²⁶ or it may refer to some other occasion in the life of Jesus,²²⁷ or to Jesus' sufferings more generally.²²⁸ Many scholars suggest that the language used here is influenced by the prayers of the righteous sufferer which are found throughout the OT and other ancient Jewish literature, though no one specific passage can be identified.²²⁹ The manner of Jesus' praying (μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων) shows that Jesus experienced emotional agony, which was one of the ways in which Jesus suffered (5:8). The passage thus poignantly demonstrates his solidarity with humanity. In line with this solidarity, a few scholars have proposed that Jesus does not pray for himself but for humanity.²³⁰ This proposal would seem to accord well with the idea that Jesus sympathizes with the weakness of humanity (4:15; cf. 5:2). Under this interpretation Jesus' prayer could be conceived as an offering (προσενέγκας; 5:7) that is given by Jesus in contrast to the sacrificial offerings (προσφέρειν) of the Levitical priests (5:3). Furthermore, Jesus' intercessory ministry (7:25) would begin with his ministry on earth. This interpretation is attractive in one sense in that it depicts Jesus as selflessly praying on behalf of others. However, this interpretation seems to run into a couple of problems. First, Jesus was not a priest on earth (8:4) since he was from the tribe of Judah (7:14). More seriously is the statement made in 5:7, where it states that Jesus prayed to "to the one who was able to save him from death" (πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον σῶζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου).

²²⁶ Boman, "Gebetskampf," 261; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 148; Craddock, "Hebrews," 62; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 145; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 198.

²²⁷ Some see it as an allusion to Golgotha; see Long, *Hebrews*, 68; Christopher Richardson, "The Passion: Reconsidering Hebrews 5.7–8," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 52.

²²⁸ Parsons, "Son and High Priest," 205; Talbert, *Suffering*, 63; Thiele, "From Son to High Priest," 104.

²²⁹ E.g., Pss 22, 31, 39, 69, 116; the Servant Songs in Isaiah; 2 & 3 Maccabees. See Martin Dibelius, "Gethsemane," in *Botschaft und Geschichte* (ed. Günther Bornkamm; vol. 1; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck]: 1953), 261; August Strobel, "Die Psalmen Grundlage der Gethsemane-Parallele: Hbr 5,7ff," *ZNW* 45 (1954): 252–66; Mathias Rissi, "Die Menschlichkeit Jesu nach Hebr. 5,7–8," *TZ* 11 (1955): 37; Boman, "Gebetskampf," 266; Brandenburger, "Text," 212–13; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 97; Paul Andriessen, "Angoisse de la mort dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," *NRTh* 96 (1974): 282–92; Horning, "Hymns," 66–67; Braun, *Hebräer*, 141; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 121; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 149; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:120; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 105–6; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 285; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 190–91; Aitken, *Jesus' Death*, 145; Schunack, *Hebräerbrief*, 72; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 110; Richardson, "Passion," 59–60.

²³⁰ Mathias Rissi, "Menschlichkeit," 40–42; Claire Clivaz, "Hebrews 5.7, Jesus' Prayer on the Mount of Olives and Jewish Christianity: Hearing Early Christian Voices in Canonical and Apocryphal Texts," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 187–88, 198–99.

While this phrase may simply be a circumlocution for God,²³¹ one could ask why this particular expression is used; it hints at the content of Jesus' prayer (or prayers). If so, the pronoun αὐτόν suggests that Jesus' prayer was for himself in some respect.

The content of Jesus' prayer and the way in which it was answered (εἰσακουσθεῖς), however, has been a matter of debate for scholars. Since Jesus did in fact die, what did Jesus pray for and how was his prayer answered? The debate swirls around the meaning of the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας. Many scholars take the view that εὐλάβεια means "fear" or "dread" and combined with the participle εἰσακουσθεῖς form a pregnant expression or brachyology which amounts to: "and being heard (was set free) from fear."²³² However, this seems to be a most unnatural way to understand the Greek. Some scholars have tried to retain the meaning of "fear" by resorting to other solutions. Adolf Harnack famously proposed that a negative, οὐκ, dropped out of the text before εἰσακουσθεῖς; hence the reading would be: "Jesus was *not* heard because of his fear."²³³ However, there is no manuscript evidence to support this hypothesis, and it still leaves unresolved the question why Jesus' prayer would *not* have been heard. Paul Andriessen contends that the preposition ἀπό cannot have a causal meaning.²³⁴ He suggests that ἀπό here means "after"; Jesus was heard after having endured fear.²³⁵ The preposition designates

²³¹ *Contra* Lane who asserts that the phrase "is simply a circumlocution for God . . . It defines not the content of Jesus' prayers but the character of God as the Lord of life who acts for the accomplishment of salvation" (*Hebrews*, 1:120; cf. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 110–11).

²³² Montefiore's rendering (*Hebrews*, 98–99). See also Stuart, *Hebrews*, 341; Tholuck, *Hebräer*, 221–24; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 185–186; Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:216–18; von Soden, *Hebräerbrief*, 45; Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 55; Héring, *Hébreux*, 53–54; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 100; Martin Dibelius, "Das himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief," in *Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze. Zweiter Band: Zum Urchristentum und zur hellenistischen Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Günther Bornkamm; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1956), 170; Cullmann, *Christology*, 96; Jukka Thurén, "Gebet und Gehorsam des Erniedrigten," *NovT* 13 (1971): 141; André Feuillet, "Les points de vue nouveaux dans l'eschatologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Studia evangelica vol. II: Papers Presented to the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1961* (ed. F. L. Cross; TUGAL 87; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 381; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 97; Gordon, *Hebrews*, 87.

²³³ Adolf von Harnack, "Zwei alte dogmatische Korrekturen im Hebräerbrief," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der Alten Kirche* (AKG 19; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931), 249–50. His proposal is accepted by Windisch, (*Hebräerbrief*, 43–44) and Bultmann, ("εὐλαβής, εὐλαβεῖσθαι, εὐλάβεια," *TDNT* 2:753).

²³⁴ Paul Andriessen and A. Lenglet, "Quelques passages difficiles de l'Épître aux Hébreux (5,7–11; 10,20; 12,2)," *Bib* 51 (1970): 209–10; Andriessen, "Angoisse," 286.

²³⁵ Andriessen, "Angoisse," 289.

“le moment où le Seigneur fut exaucé.”²³⁶ But this is an awkward construal of the Greek.²³⁷

Many other scholars, on the other hand, take εὐλάβεια to mean “godly fear” or “reverence.”²³⁸ This meaning is consistent with other passages in Hebrews (11:7; 12:28) and the rest of the NT (Acts 2:5; 8:2) in which cognate forms are found. Scholars who advocate this view note that the preposition ἀπό may have a causal meaning, “because of.”²³⁹ This view can be further divided into two camps. One group of scholars proposes that Jesus’ prayer was heard, not by his deliverance from death, but through his own perfect acceptance of God’s will. For example, Spicq remarks, “On peut se demander comment la prière du Christ s’est révélée efficace? Non quant à son objet immediate: l’exemption de la mort, mais vis-à-vis de son objet définitif et profond . . . l’accord avec la volonté du Père.”²⁴⁰ Swetnam makes the novel suggestion that Jesus prayed *not* to be saved from death but *to* die, thus demonstrating his obedience to God’s will to die an atoning death on behalf of humanity.²⁴¹ These interpretations align well with the following verse which states that Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” (5:8). The other group of scholars take their cue

²³⁶ Andriessen and Lenglet, “Quelques passages,” 210.

²³⁷ Peterson, *Perfection*, 90.

²³⁸ E.g., Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 510; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 245; Lowrie, *Hebrews*, 157; F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews: With Notes and Introduction* (CBSC; ed. J. J. S. Perowne; Cambridge: University Press, 1883), 99; Ménégos, *Théologie*, 97; Milligan, *Theology*, 109; Peake, *Hebrews*, 135; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 134; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 35–36; Meeter, *Heavenly High Priesthood*, 51–52; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 66; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 164; Joachim Jeremias, “Hbr 5,7–10,” *ZNW* 44 (1952–1953): 110; Médebielle, “Hébreux,” 311; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:114; Rissi, “Menschlichkeit,” 38; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 97; Friedrich, “Lied,” 106; Boman, “Gebetskampf,” 267; Christian Maurer, “Erhört wegen dere Gottesfurcht,” *Hebr 5,7*, in *Neues Testament und Geschichte: Historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament. Oscar Cullmann zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds. Heinrich Baltensweiler and Bo Reicke; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 277; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 184–85; Peterson, *Perfection*, 90–91; Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 140; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 99; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 122; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 151–52; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 129; Estrada, *Hebreos*, 241; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 105; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 290; Darrell J. Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1993), 65; Koester, *Hebrews*, 289; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 146; Kurian, *Jesus*, 72; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 200; Richardson, “Passion,” 62–66; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 367; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 164–65; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 259–60.

²³⁹ Matt 18:7; Luke 19:3; 24:41; John 21:6; Acts 12:14; 22:11.

²⁴⁰ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:117. See also Sampson, *Hebrews*, 182; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 134; MacNeill, *Christology*, 22; Feuillet, “L’évocation,” 52; Morris, “Hebrews,” 50; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 130; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 138; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:215–16; Peterson, *Perfection*, 89–92; Estrada, *Hebreos*, 170, 250.

²⁴¹ James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah* (AnBib 94; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 182–84; idem, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7–8,” *Bib* 81 (2000): 360.

from verse 7 itself: Jesus prayed to be delivered from death (ἐκ θανάτου) in some manner. The prepositional phrase ἐκ θανάτου can be construed in one of two ways. Jesus prayed to be delivered: (1) “from death” itself;²⁴² or (2) “out of death,” that is, out of the realm or power of death.²⁴³ This last interpretation seems to be the best; the answer to his prayer came by means of his resurrection and exaltation.²⁴⁴ This passage then reveals Jesus’ piety and devotion and his dependence upon God as he turned to him in fervent prayer in times of trouble. This piety and devotion is confirmed by the answer to Jesus’ prayer.

He Suffered

As part of his human experience, Jesus also endured suffering (2:9–10, 18; 5:8; 9:26; 13:12). While the manner of suffering is often unspecified, in a few places Jesus’ crucifixion seems to be in view (9:26; 13:12). After all, his suffering involved his death (2:9). Nevertheless, the whole range of adversities experienced by humans is probably in view.²⁴⁵ Jesus experienced temptation by what he suffered (2:18), but his suffering was the means to learn obedience (5:8) and to become perfect (2:10). The purpose for Jesus’ suffering was to sanctify people (13:12). Jesus’ willingness to become human and experience suffering shows the extraordinary extent to which Jesus’ compassion for humanity had led him.

²⁴² Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 246; Peterson, *Perfection*, 88; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 128. Hewitt claims that Jesus prayed to be delivered from death in the Garden of Gethsemane, so that he might die on the cross for the salvation of humanity (*Hebrews*, 100). This interpretation does not seem warranted from the text.

²⁴³ Milligan, *Theology*, 108; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 35; Vos, “Priesthood,” 585; Meeter, *Heavenly High Priesthood*, 51–52; Jeremias, “5,7–10,” 109; Friedrich, “Lied,” 104; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 184; Joy Tetley, “The Priesthood of Christ in Hebrews,” *Anvil* 5 (1988): 203; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150; idem, “‘Heard Because of His Reverence’ (Heb 5:7),” *JBL* 98 (1979): 91; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1120; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:300–301; John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 217; Kurianal, *Jesus*, 70; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 192; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 111; Richardson, “Passion,” 60; Bruce L. McCormack, “‘With Loud Cries and Tears’: The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 65; Moffitt, “Another Priest,” 69–72; idem, “Way,” 249–52; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 199; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 207–11; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 243.

²⁴⁴ David Moffitt appeals to 11:9 as a parallel passage that illuminates 5:7. He notes the following parallels: (1) both Jesus and Abraham are “tested”; (2) in both passages it says that God has the “ability” or “power” to deliver someone out of death; (3) this particular belief about God seems to be the primary element of faith in both passages; (4) in both cases faithful endurance is rewarded (“Another Priest,” 72).

²⁴⁵ Talbert, *Suffering*, 61.

He Learned Obedience

The author states that Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” (5:8). It is unlikely that the author implies that Jesus was once disobedient to God since this is incompatible with Jesus being without sin (4:15; 7:26). Rather, the author seems to suggest that Jesus demonstrated obedience in the midst of circumstances which he never experienced before. The language of Phil 2:7–8 seems apt here: “And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” Being the eternal Son, Jesus had never experienced suffering, but his incarnation placed him into the new experiences of human suffering, in which he displayed obedience. Elsewhere, Jesus demonstrates his willingness to obey God’s will in taking on a human body (10:7, 9).

He Was Made Perfect

Three times the author tells us that Jesus was “made perfect” (τελειόω; 2:10; 5:9; 7:28). The verb τελειόω can have a range of meanings including “to bring to completion, complete, accomplish, finish, fulfill, make perfect.”²⁴⁶ The notion of perfection in Hebrews is complex and it may convey a variety of nuances.²⁴⁷ The verb may involve Jesus’ exaltation or glorification,²⁴⁸ but this does not exhaust all of its usages in Hebrews, since Jesus’ perfection is also associated with his experience of suffering (2:10; 5:8–9). The verb may indicate moral or ethical development,²⁴⁹ but it is unlikely that the author has this meaning in mind with regard to Jesus since Jesus was without sin (4:15) or blemish (9:14), and was holy, blameless, and undefiled (7:26). The verb also may have a cultic meaning. In the LXX the expression τελειοῦν τὰς χεῖρας translates the Hebrew expression “to fill the hands” (יָדַי מְלֵא), which refers to the ordination or consecration of someone to the priesthood (Exod 29:9, 29, 33, 35; Lev 4:5;

²⁴⁶ R. Schippers, “τέλος,” *NIDNTT* 2:59.

²⁴⁷ For more thorough surveys of the various views, see Peterson, *Perfection*, 1–20; John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 49. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 185–200; McCrudden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 5–24.

²⁴⁸ Käsemann, *Wandering*, 139–40; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 101–3; Silva, “Perfection,” 65; Laub, *Bekennnis*, 72; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 87; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 195–98; Koester, *Hebrews*, 124–25.

²⁴⁹ Paul Johannes Du Plessis, in *TEAEIOΣ: The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1959), 216–17; Allen Wikgren, “Patterns of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *NTS* 6 (1960): 159–67; Cullmann, *Christology*, 93–97; Grant R. Osborne, “Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Grace Unlimited* (ed. Clark H. Pinnock; Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 157; Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 55.

8:33; 16:32; Num 3:3). Only once does it appear absolutely to refer to ordination (Lev 21:10). Since the expression τελειοῦν τὰς χεῖρας does not appear in Hebrews, the idea of ordination or consecration is probably not its primary meaning, although it cannot be completely ruled out.²⁵⁰ In Hebrews the verb is best understood to have a functional or vocational usage indicating that Jesus is completely prepared and fully equipped for his role as high priest.²⁵¹ Isaacs states it nicely when she writes, "The 'perfecting' of Jesus, therefore, has nothing to do with his moral perfectibility, but refers to the process whereby he fulfilled his vocational qualifications of Melchizedekian priesthood."²⁵²

In the immediate context of all three passages in which obedience and perfection occur (2:10; 5:8–9; 7:28), the author indicates that Jesus has played a significant role in salvation. He is the pioneer or author of salvation (2:10) as well as the source of salvation (5:9) for believers; he is able to "save those who approach God through him" (7:25). Moreover, each of the sections emphasizes that he became a high priest (2:17; 5:10; 7:26–28). Therefore, Jesus' learning obedience and being made perfect seems to be related to this dual role as high priest and the author of salvation. When Jesus took on human flesh, he was asked to do something he never had to do before in his preexistent state: he was asked to suffer and die on behalf of humanity. So while Jesus was never in discord with his father, Jesus had to demonstrate obedience in a manner he had not previously experienced. In this respect it appears that this is what is meant by Jesus "learning obedience." His obedience maintained his sinless perfection and in this respect he was "made perfect." His sinlessness allowed him to become the source of salvation for believers by means of being the perfect sacrifice to take away the sins of the people (9:14, 26–27). Additionally, Jesus' suffering and obedience perfected him for the role of high priest since he was able to experience the weaknesses of humanity (2:17–18; 4:15).

²⁵⁰ Those that see some cultic connotations to the verb here include Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 44–46; Du Plessis, *Perfection*, 212–14; Jerome Smith, *A Priest For Ever: A Study of Typology and Eschatology of Hebrews* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 71; Osborne, "Soteriology," 157; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 76; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:57; Brenda B. Colijn, "'Let Us Approach': Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JETS* 39 (1996): 580; Craddock, "Hebrews," 39.

²⁵¹ Vos, "Priesthood," 589; Du Plessis, *Perfection*, 215–16; Peterson, *Perfection*, 66–67, 70, 73, 97, 102–103, 119, 121, 124–125; Terveen, "Jesus in Hebrews," 54; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 86; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:57; Craddock, "Hebrews," 39; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 73; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 106.

²⁵² Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 79.

He Offered/Sacrificed Himself

Despite the ignominious manner of his execution, his death was indeed a noble one. His death was a willing offering of himself (7:27; 9:14, 25, 28; 10:10) and a sacrifice (9:26; 10:12) through the shedding of his blood (9:12, 14; 12:24; 13:12) for the benefit of all people (2:9). His blood is more efficacious than the blood of bulls and goats (9:12–14). The author employs a brief synkrisis in 13:10–12 contrasting the efficacy of Jesus' blood versus the blood of sacrificial animals. The statement in 13:10, however, has been a matter of scholarly debate. What is the altar (θυσιαστήριον) from which those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat? Some scholars argue that this statement refers to the eucharistic table of the Lord's Supper,²⁵³ but this is unlikely since the author shows no apparent interest in the Lord's Supper elsewhere, the term "altar" was not used of the Lord's Table until the second century, and βρῶμα ("food") was not used of the bread of the Eucharist. Moreover, the author compares the sacrifice of Jesus to the holocaust offering on the Day of Atonement, from which no one ate (13:11–12). It is unlikely that the author has the Eucharist in mind. Other scholars take the altar to represent the heavenly sanctuary and hence inaccessible for those who still adhere to the old covenant,²⁵⁴ but this is equally unlikely since the altar was situated outside the earthly tabernacle; the author would not have conceived of an altar in the heavenly sanctuary. Most likely, the altar is a metonymic expression designating the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.²⁵⁵ The point of the analogy

²⁵³ This interpretation is popular mostly among Catholic interpreters: Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 372; F. D. V. Narborough, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: In the Revised Version with Introduction and Commentary* (Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon, 1930), 150; Médebielle, "Hébreux," 368–69; E. L. Randall, "The Altar of Hebrews 13:10," *ACR* 46 (1969): 197–208; Paul Andriessen, "L'eucharistie dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," *NRTh* 94 (1972): 275–76; Thurén, *Lobopfer*, 83–90, 204; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 275; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 179; deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 275; Pierre Grelot, *Une lecture de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 134–35.

²⁵⁴ Peake, *Hebrews*, 241; J. Cambier, *Eschatologie ou hellénisme dans l'Épître aux Hébreux: Une étude sur μένειν et l'exhortation finale de l'épître* (ALBO 2.12; Bruges-Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949), 69; Franz Joseph Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes* (MThS.H 9; Munich: Karl Zink, 1955), 191; Filson, *Yesterday*, 48–50; Theissen, *Untersuchungen*, 78; Ronald Williamson, "The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *NTS* 21 (1975): 308–9; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 146; idem, "Outside the Camp: A Study of Heb 13:9–14," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 58–59; Craddock, "Hebrews," 166; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 368.

²⁵⁵ R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Tyndale, 1950), 48; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:425; Helmut Koester, "Outside the Camp: Hebrews 13:9–14," *HTR* 55 (1962): 312; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 244; Antony Snell, "We Have an Altar," *RTR* 23 (1964): 17; James Sanders, "Outside the Camp," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 24 (1969): 242; Lightfoot,

in these verses seems to be that Jesus' sacrifice is not the type of sacrifice that can be eaten, much like the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement on which the whole carcasses of the sacrificial animals were burned outside the camp (Lev 16:27). The analogy should not be pressed too far, however, since in fact the sacrificial animals were killed inside the camp and it was only the carcasses that were burned outside the camp, while Jesus' sacrifice took place outside the city (13:13). The purpose for Jesus' sacrifice of himself is so that he might sanctify believers (13:12). Hence, Jesus' sacrifice was committed for the benefit of others.

In 12:24 the author employs personification in stating that Jesus' blood speaks better than the blood of Abel (κρείττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ). The meaning of this brief synkrisis, however, is a matter of debate. The passage is a clear allusion to Gen 4:10–11 where God says to Cain, "Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand." The following interpretations have been suggested: (1) Abel's blood cries out for vengeance; Jesus' blood cries out for mercy, grace, reconciliation, and/or forgiveness;²⁵⁶ (2) Abel's blood calls for the exclusion of the sinner from God's presence; Jesus' blood draws the sinner near;²⁵⁷ (3) Abel's blood cries out from the ground; Jesus intercedes for people in heaven;²⁵⁸ (4) Abel was the first martyr; his death has atoning significance;²⁵⁹ Jesus' death is superior in that it provides a permanent atonement for sins.²⁶⁰ Some interpreters allow for more than

Jesus, 250; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 577–78; Loader, *Sohn*, 179–80; Morris, "Hebrews," 149–150; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 396; Lindars, "Rhetorical Structure," 389; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 378; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:537–38; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:219–20; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3:378, 381; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 216; idem, "Hebrews 13," 280–81; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 139; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 711; Koester, *Hebrews*, 568; Schunack, *Hebräerbrief*, 226; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 299; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 158; Norman H. Young, "'Bearing His Reproach' (Heb 13.9–14)," *NTS* 48 (2002): 248; Michaels, "Hebrews," 467; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 470; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 521; Allen, *Hebrews*, 616; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 697.

²⁵⁶ Tholuck, *Hebräer*, 435; Marchant, "Sacrifice," 205; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 202; Williamson, *Philo*, 325; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 551–52; idem, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews. Part I: The Significance of the Blood of Jesus," *BSac* 130 (1973): 108; Peterson, *Perfection*, 165; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 395; Braun, *Hebräer*, 440; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 231–32; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 261; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 361; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:473–74; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 682–83; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 126; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 468; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 344.

²⁵⁷ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xlii; 218–19; Roger Le Déaut, "Traditions targumiques dans le corpus paulinien? (Hebr 11,4 et 12,24; Gal 4,29–30; II Cor 3,16)," *Bib* 42 (1961): 35–36.

²⁵⁸ Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3:324.

²⁵⁹ The blood of martyrs has atoning significance in 4 *Macc.* 6:29 and 17:22.

²⁶⁰ Seeberg says, "Die Juden wussten von einer sühnenden Wirkung des Blutes der Gerechten . . . und legten eine solche Wirkung sicher auch dem Blut dessen bei, der als der

one explanation here.²⁶¹ Smillie, followed by Allen, argues that it is not the blood that is speaking, but God or Jesus.²⁶² He argues that the participle λαλοῦντι does not modify αἷματι and the phrase κρείττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ “would simply be the last of eleven objects to which ‘you have come’, all listed in the dative.”²⁶³ The list would climax with “the one who speaks better than Abel.” While Smillie’s reading would resolve the awkward transition to 12:25, where “the one who is speaking” probably refers to God, Smillie overlooks the fact that the list of objects in 12:22–24 are all separated by the conjunction καί. It would be odd, then, that the last two items on the list were not separated by a conjunction. On the whole, it seems best to accept the first interpretation since it accords well with the original context of Gen 4, and the motif of blood crying out for vengeance was common in later Jewish literature.²⁶⁴ Jesus’ sacrifice did not bring condemnation but grace to humanity.

He Experienced Death

His suffering would eventually lead to his death (2:9, 14). The author gives us two specific details about Jesus’ death. The location of his death was “outside the city gate” (13:12). The means of his death was by crucifixion (12:2). Jesus’ death was an ignominious death. The author declares that in enduring the crucifixion, Jesus despised or disregarded the shame (αἰσχύνῃς καταφρονήσας; 12:2) and that it was a reproach or disgrace (ὀνειδισμόν; 13:13; cf. 11:16). Crucifixion was a common Roman means of execution and was usually reserved for criminals. The author also tells us that Jesus endured “hostility” (ἀντιλογία) against himself by sinners (12:3).²⁶⁵ This is the only time that the author explicitly tells us that Jesus received any kind of opposition, although Jesus did conquer the devil (2:14) and his enemies will be made a footstool for his feet (1:13; 10:13).

erste Gerechte Märtyrer wurde. Demgegenüber macht der Verfasser geltend, dass Christ Blut besser redet, d. h. wirksamer ist als Abels Blut” (*Hebräer*, 139). See also Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:409; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 377; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 284.

²⁶¹ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:409–10; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 233; Michel, *Hebräer*, 468–69; Koester, *Hebrews*, 546.

²⁶² Gene R. Smillie, “‘The One Who Is Speaking’ in Hebrews 12:25,” *TynBul* 55 (2004): 280; Allen, *Hebrews*, 594. O’Brien also seems to favor this reading of the passage, but not without noting difficulties (*Hebrews*, 489–90).

²⁶³ Smillie, “Speaking,” 279.

²⁶⁴ *Jub.* 4:3; *1 En.* 22:6–7; *T. Benj.* 7:3–5; *4 Macc.* 18:11; *L.A.B.* 16:2; *Tg. Neof.* *1 Gen* 4:10; *m. Sanh.* 4:5; *b. Sanh.* 37b (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:473).

²⁶⁵ Croy explains that ἀντιλογία primarily has a connotation of verbal opposition, but may include physical opposition as well (*Endurance*, 189).

Jesus demonstrated endurance (ὑπομένω) by putting up with the painful torture of the cross and the hostility of sinners against himself (12:2–3). The reason for his endurance is expressed in the relative clause in verse 2: ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς. The clause has elicited two major interpretations based primarily on the meaning of the preposition ἀντί. The first line of interpretation takes ἀντί with the idea of substitution: “instead of, in place of.”²⁶⁶ Jesus chose death on a cross in place of the joy that lay before him. This joy may refer to earthly privileges or to the heavenly bliss Jesus enjoyed in the presence of God. Lane represents the former view: “the joy to which reference is made cannot be the eternal felicity that Jesus shared with the Father, of which he voluntarily divested himself in his incarnation . . . It has reference to a precise historical circumstance in which Jesus was confronted with a supreme moral choice.”²⁶⁷ Montefiore takes the latter interpretation: “The passage refers rather to the joy of eternal sonship in heaven which Jesus renounced in order to endure a cross, and thereby was given the highest honour of heaven. This whole passage describes the self-emptying of Jesus and his glorification in a movement of thought very similar to that of Phil. ii. 6–11.”²⁶⁸ Either one of these interpretations is attractive because they depict the selflessness of Jesus, who without any regard for himself chose to endure the shame of the cross on behalf of humanity. The second line of interpretation takes ἀντί causally: “for the sake of, because of, on account of.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ See Matt 2:22; Luke 11:11; 1 Cor 11:15; Jas 4:15.

²⁶⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:413. Buchanan imagines that Jesus originated from a wealthy family and that the joy he surrendered was wealth and prominence (*Challenge from Zion*, 374), but this interpretation is far-fetched.

²⁶⁸ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 215. See also von Soden, *Hebräerbrief*, 93; Joh. B. Nisius, “Zur Erklärung von Hebr 12, 2,” *BZ* 14 (1916): 44–61; F. W. Grosheide, *De Brief aan de Hebreëen en de Brief van Jakobus* (2d ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1955), 286; Andriessen and Lenglet, “Quelques passages,” 216–20; idem, *Hebreëen*, 217–18; Paul Andriessen, “Renonçant à la joie qui lui revenait,” *NRTh* 97 (1975); D’Angelo, *Moses*, 34, 53; Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 184.

²⁶⁹ Luke 1:20; 19:44; Acts 12:23; Eph 5:31; 2 Thess 2:10. See Tholuck, *Hebräer*, 405–6; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:304–6; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 613–14; Davidson, *Hebrews*, 234–35; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 122; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 256–57; Ménégos, *Théologie*, 94–96; MacNeill, *Christology*, 25; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 109; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 196; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 83; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 428; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 498; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:387; Médebielle, “Hébreux,” 360; Michel, *Hebräer*, 435; Bonnard, “La traduction de Hébreux 12, 2: ‘C’est en vue de la joie que Jésus endura la croix,’” *NRTh* 97 (1975): 420–22; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 229; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 523–24; Morris, “Hebrews,” 134; Peterson, *Perfection*, 170; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 368; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 357; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:174; Long, *Hebrews*, 128; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 436–37; Koester, *Hebrews*, 523–24; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 318; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 328; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 248; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 455; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 213–16; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 609n38; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 137.

This interpretation is preferable in light of the racing metaphor employed in these verses.²⁷⁰ The joy would then be the prize towards which Jesus strived. Jesus was able to endure the cross because he anticipated the heavenly joy that awaited him. Johnson explains, "That Jesus endured for the sake of the reward would not appear morally problematic in the least for ancient readers, certainly not within the context of the athletic metaphor for moral endeavor."²⁷¹ The joy that Jesus received may also have included the joy of bringing redemption to humanity.²⁷² This interpretation is also consistent with 10:35–36 in which the author urges his audience not to throw away their reward, but that they need endurance in order to obtain the promises.

He Saved/Redeemed Humanity

The author uses a variety of soteriological terms to describe the efficacy of Jesus' death. Jesus' death brought eternal salvation (σωτηρία; 5:9). In 7:25 it says that Jesus is able to save (σώζειν) εἰς τὸ παντελές. This prepositional phrase can be taken qualitatively ("completely, fully, wholly") or temporally ("forever, for all time").²⁷³ A choice between the options

²⁷⁰ Croy's arguments in favor of this interpretation are decisive. If ἀντί means "instead of," then Jesus "makes the choice of a martyr"; if ἀντί means "for the sake of," then Jesus is the "champion of enduring faith" (*Endurance*, 37). The race imagery is dominant in the context. There is a clear parallel with verse 1 between the joy that "lies before" (προκειμένης) Jesus and the race that "lies before" (προκειμένων) believers. The parallel structure implies the goal orientation of both passages. The preposition ἀντί is used with the meaning "for the sake of" in 12:16 in regard to Esau's surrendering his birthright. In 11:26 Moses chose to endure the "reproach of Christ" in order to obtain his reward (μισθαποδοσίαν). Grammatically, the meaning of "instead of" for ἀντί is problematic because it would mean that χαρά was also the object of the verb ὑπέμεινεν in 12:2 (*Endurance*, 180–83).

²⁷¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 318.

²⁷² Boyce Johnny Littleton, "Exposition of Hebrews 12:2," *FM* 16 (1999): 24; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 339; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 218–19.

²⁷³ The ambiguity is reflected in the differing translations: the NASB ("forever") and the NRSV ("for all time") render it temporally; the ESV, KJV ("to the uttermost"), and NIV ("completely") render it qualitatively. Scholars who prefer the qualitative meaning include, Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:371; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 193; Peake, *Hebrews*, 102; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 53; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 206n71; T. Robinson, *Hebrews*, 103; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 342n1; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:197; Héring, *Hébreux*, 72; Morris, "Hebrews," 71; Peterson, *Perfection*, 114; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 127; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 114; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 248. The only other instance of εἰς τὸ παντελές (Luke 13:11) should be understood qualitatively and the adverb πάντοτε in the next clause may capture the temporal idea. Scholars who prefer the temporal meaning include Kuss, *Hebräer*, 102–3; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 100; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 129; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 127; Thompson, *Beginnings*, 126; Braun, *Hebräer*, 220; Hegemann, *Hebräer*, 159; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:44; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 88; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 416; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 391; Craddock, "Hebrews," 92; Kurian, *Jesus*, 134. This view takes the expression as equivalent to σωτηρίας αἰωνίου in 5:9. Other scholars are undecided or retain both

is difficult and it is likely that the author intentionally exploits the ambiguity.²⁷⁴ Here the author expresses the completeness and permanence of the salvation Jesus brings.

He also came to bring redemption (λύτρωσις; 9:12, ἀπολύτρωσις; 9:15). The noun λύτρωσις and its many related words have the idea of “redemption, ransom, release, deliverance, liberation.”²⁷⁵ In Greek literature the word group could refer to the ransom of prisoners of war or slaves.²⁷⁶ In the LXX the word group was often used in reference to God’s deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.²⁷⁷ The word group was also used in reference to the redemption of the firstborn;²⁷⁸ redemption of houses, land, and people in the year of Jubilee;²⁷⁹ and in connection with the redemption of vows.²⁸⁰ The word group also took on a more generalized meaning of salvation or deliverance from enemies, troubles, death, Sheol, and so forth.²⁸¹ In the NT Jesus is identified as the one who accomplishes redemption (Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 1:30; Col 1:14) through the offering of himself (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14) by the shedding of his blood (Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19; cf. Rom 3:25). Ideas closely associated with redemption include justification, righteousness, sanctification, purification, and forgiveness of sins (Rom 3:24–25; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13–14; Titus 2:14). The author of Hebrews speaks of “eternal redemption” (αἰώνιαν λύτρωσιν; 9:12) and an “eternal inheritance” (αἰωνίου κληρονομίας; 9:15). Such gifts require a ransom price: Jesus’ blood, which is infinitely more precious than the blood of goats and calves (9:12).

meanings: Teodorico, *Ebrei*, 131; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 125; Michel, *Hebräer*, 276n2; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 146; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 269n35; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 210; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:62; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 154; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 274; Allen, *Hebrews*, 429.

²⁷⁴ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 210.

²⁷⁵ The word group includes: λύτρον (price of release, ransom, ransom price), ἀντίλυτρον (ransom, ransom price), λυτρώω (to ransom, redeem), λύτρωσις, ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption, deliverance, release), λυτρωτής (redeemer). See W. Mundle and C. Brown, “λύτρον,” *NIDNTT* 3:189–200; see also Büchsel’s entries in *TDNT* 4:340–56.

²⁷⁶ Büchsel, “λύτρον,” *TDNT* 3:340.

²⁷⁷ Exod 6:6; 15:13; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:6; 15:15; 24:18; 2 Sam 7:23; 1 Chr 17:21; Pss 77:42 LXX; 105:10 LXX; Mic 6:4. In Deut 21:18; Neh 1:10; Ps 73:2 LXX the exodus is also likely in view.

²⁷⁸ Exod 13:13, 15; 34:20; Num 3:12, 46, 48, 49, 51; 18:15–17.

²⁷⁹ Lev 25:24–26, 29–32, 48–49, 51–52, 54.

²⁸⁰ Lev 27:13, 15, 19, 20, 27–29, 31, 33.

²⁸¹ 2 Sam 4:9; 1 Kgs 1:29; Pss 7:3; 24:22 LXX; 25:11 LXX; 30:6 LXX; 31:7 LXX; 33:23 LXX; 43:27 LXX; 48:8–9, 16 LXX; 54:19 LXX; 58:2 LXX; 68:19 LXX; 70:23 LXX; 71:14 LXX; 76:16 LXX; 102:4 LXX; 106:2 LXX; 110:9 LXX; 118:134, 154 LXX; 129:7–8 LXX; 135:24 LXX; 143:10 LXX; Hos 7:13; 13:14; Mic 4:10; Zeph 3:15; 10:8; Isa 43:1; 44:23; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9; Jer 15:21; 38:11 LXX; Lam 3:58; 5:8; Dan 4:34; 6:28 LXX; 1 Macc 4:11; Sir 48:20; 49:10; 50:24; 51:2. In a few passages God himself is described as “Redeemer” (Pss 18:15 LXX; 77:35 LXX; Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:24; Jer 27:34 LXX).

He Bore and Removed Sins

The author makes two statements at the end of chapter 9 to indicate that Jesus has taken care of the sin problem once and for all. In 9:26 he uses the word ἀθέτησις, which is a legal term meaning “abrogation, annulment.”²⁸² In essence, the term implies that Jesus effects the abolition, removal, or cancellation of sin. The adverb ἅπαξ suggests the permanence of this removal of sin. Some scholars believe that the language used here (e.g., ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου; πεφανέρωται) implies Jesus’ preexistence and that his sacrifice was sufficient to cover the sins of previous generations.²⁸³ In 9:28 the author remarks that Jesus was “offered once to bear the sins of many” (ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας). The language of “bearing sins” is also found in 1 Pet 2:24 and is reminiscent of the Suffering Servant in Isa 53:12. The language suggests that Jesus’ sacrifice was substitutionary; he bears the consequences or punishment for sins on behalf of others. His sacrifice benefited many (πολλῶν) people. The two aorists (προσενεχθεὶς, ἀνενεγκεῖν), in conjunction with the adverb ἅπαξ, again suggest the permanent efficacy of his sacrifice.

He Cleansed Sins and Consciences

The author also states that Jesus has made cleansing or purification (καθαρισμός; 1:3) for sins, as well as cleansing of consciences (καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν; 9:14). The statement that Jesus made cleansing for sin suggests that sin is viewed as a defilement that had to be purged. The noun καθαρισμός was most often used in the LXX and the NT for the cleansing of ritual impurity, whether of persons or things.²⁸⁴ Only one other time is the noun used for the purification of sins (2 Pet 1:9). The verb form (καθαρίζω) is also sometimes used to refer to moral or spiritual cleansing in the NT.²⁸⁵ In the OT purification from sin was accomplished on the Day of Atonement (Exod 30:10; Lev 16:30). But Hebrews indicates that the old covenant sacrificial system was ultimately ineffectual because it could not take away sins (10:4, 11), nor cleanse consciences (9:9; 10:2). Only Jesus is able to accomplish true cleansing for the believer. For Jesus to be

²⁸² Maurer, “ἀθετέω, ἀθέτησις,” *TDNT* 8:158.

²⁸³ Ménégosz, *Théologie*, 126; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 133; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:268–69; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 176; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 385; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:93; Koester, *Hebrews*, 422.

²⁸⁴ Exod 29:36; 30:10; Lev 14:32; 15:13; 1 Chr 23:28; Neh 12:45; 2 Macc 1:18; 2:16, 19; 10:5; Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 5:14; John 2:6; 3:25.

²⁸⁵ Acts 15:9; 2 Cor 7:1; Titus 2:14; Jas 4:8; 1 John 1:7, 9.

able to accomplish cleansing implies Jesus' own moral purity (4:15; 7:26; 9:14). The aorist middle participle (ποιησάμενος) indicates two things. First, the aorist tense shows that Jesus' act of cleansing is a completed, past action. Second, the middle voice suggests that "Christ Himself, in His own Person made the purification: He did not make it as something distinct from Himself, simply provided by His power."²⁸⁶ In 9:14 the author says that Jesus purifies consciences (καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν). This cleansing is an internal cleansing compared to the external cleansing (τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα; 9:13) that the blood of goats and bulls can only effect.

He Atoned for Sins

The verb ἱλάσκομαι (2:17), which is often translated "atone" or "make atonement," has generated no small controversy among scholars. The controversy involves whether ἱλάσκομαι should be translated "to expiate" or "to propitiate." Proponents for the translation "expiate" argue that propitiation means to appease the wrath of someone; ἱλάσκομαι normally takes a person as the direct object of the verb, but in Heb 2:17 the word "sins" (τὰς ἁμαρτίας) is the direct object; hence it should be translated "expiate," to make amends for sin.²⁸⁷ Attridge, one representative of this position, argues that in Hebrews "Christ's sacrifice is always directed at removing sin and its effects, not at propitiating God."²⁸⁸ On the other hand, proponents for the translation "propitiate" contend that ἱλάσκομαι is used intransitively and that τὰς ἁμαρτίας is an accusative of respect: "to make propitiation with reference to the sins of the people."²⁸⁹ Guthrie represents this view when he remarks:

²⁸⁶ Westcott, *Hebrews*, 15; see also Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:10; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 38; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 34; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:15; MacLeod, "Finality," 224; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 107; Allen, *Hebrews*, 127.

²⁸⁷ Those who translate ἱλάσκομαι as "expiate" include: Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 68; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 95; Tetley, "Priesthood," 206–7; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:134; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 189; Craddock, "Hebrews," 41–42; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 102–3; Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 305–6; Barry C. Joslin, "Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews," *SBJT* 11 (2007): 94; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 68; I. Howard Marshall, "Soteriology in Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 260.

²⁸⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96n192.

²⁸⁹ Hughes' translation (*Hebrews*, 121). In addition to Hughes, other proponents of the translation "propitiation" include: Sampson, *Hebrews*, 107; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 58; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 58; Morris, "Hebrews," 30; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 95; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:65–66; Allen, *Hebrews*, 224.

Many scholars object to the rendering “propitiation” for the Greek *hilaskomai*, because it conjures up ideas of placating an angry deity. But this is never in view in the New Testament usage where it is God himself who provides the propitiation (*cf.* Rom. 3:25) out of his deep love for mankind (Rom. 5:8).²⁹⁰

More recently, some scholars have argued that both meanings are present in the verb.²⁹¹ Koester provides the fullest explanation:

A complex view of atonement encompasses both expiation, which is the removal of sin, and propitiation, which is the averting of divine wrath. The idea of propitiation is appropriate in Hebrews, since the author assumes that divine wrath threatens his listeners, just as it threatened Moses' generation (3:7–4:13; 10:26–31; 12:29). The dominant element in Hebrews, however, is expiation, as indicated by the earlier comment that Christ “made purification for sins” (1:3).²⁹²

The present tense indicates that Jesus' activity of expiation/propitiation is ongoing.

He Destroyed the Power of the Devil

The ἵνα clause in 2:14 indicates that one of the purposes of the incarnation (the partaking of “flesh and blood”) was to destroy (καταργέω) the power of the devil over death (2:14). The verb καταργέω has two basic meanings: (1) to make ineffective, powerless, idle; to nullify; or (2) to abolish, wipe out, set aside, destroy, do away with, bring to an end.²⁹³ Here the devil, who makes his only appearance in Hebrews, is described as one who has power over death. Through his own death, Jesus nullifies or abolishes the devil's control over death.²⁹⁴ The author does not really explain how Jesus' death accomplishes this, but it is ironic that Jesus uses his own death to break the devil's power over death. Jesus' resurrection seems to be implied here.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 95.

²⁹¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 233, 241; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 77; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 347; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 122.

²⁹² Koester, *Hebrews*, 241.

²⁹³ “καταργέω,” BAGD, 417. The verb καταργέω occurs twenty-five times in the Pauline letters (Rom 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6; 1 Cor 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, 10, 11; 15:24, 26; 2 Cor 3:7, 11, 13, 14; Gal 3:17; 5:4, 11; Eph 2:15; 2 Thess 2:8; 2 Tim 1:10), but only once here in Hebrews.

²⁹⁴ The phrase διὰ τοῦ θανάτου is ambiguous, but it most likely refers to Jesus' own death, rather than the death of the devil or humanity.

²⁹⁵ So, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 94–95; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 86.

He Freed Humanity from the Fear of Death

In 2:15 the author states that a second purpose for Jesus' incarnation was to release (ἀπαλλάσσω) humanity from the fear of death. The verb ἀπαλλάσσω means to "set free, deliver, release, liberate" someone from something.²⁹⁶ The author uses the metaphor of slavery (δουλείας) to describe the state of humanity. Koester explains that ἀπαλλάσσω "could be used for the legal process of manumission (Philo, *Special Laws* 1.77) or for freeing people from slavery through conflict (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.363), which is the sense here."²⁹⁷ Jesus is thus depicted as a liberator who frees humanity from slavery.²⁹⁸ In these two verses (2:14–15) the implication is that Jesus willingly took on human flesh and experienced death for the purpose of giving benefit to humanity. As deSilva remarks, "Jesus' own death is ennobled . . . by the greatness of the gift and the extent of the cost incurred."²⁹⁹

He Takes Hold of Humanity

The verb ἐπιλαμβάνεται (2:16) has generated considerable discussion. Patristic and medieval interpreters universally construed the verb here to mean "to assume the nature of" humanity, rather than of angels.³⁰⁰ This interpretation aligns well with 2:14a and 2:17a. This interpretation is followed by a few modern interpreters.³⁰¹ Most modern scholars, however, interpret the verb to mean "to come to the aid of, help, assist" as a virtual equivalent to βοηθήσαι in 2:18.³⁰² The verb ἐπιλαμβάνομαι literally means to

²⁹⁶ "ἀπαλλάσσω," BAGD, 80; Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 176.

²⁹⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 232.

²⁹⁸ Lane argues that Hebrews depicts Jesus "as the champion (ὁ ἀρχηγός) who crushed the tyrant who possessed the power of death in order to rescue those whom he had enslaved" (*Hebrews*, 1:61); see also G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 111; McKnight, "Hebrews," 74. Others have seen a warrior or combat motif in this passage; see Asumang, *Unlocking*, 92; Felix H. Cortez, "The Anchor of the Soul that Enters within the Veil: The Ascension of the 'Son' in the Letter to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2008), 241–46.

²⁹⁹ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 118.

³⁰⁰ Westcott, *Hebrews*, 55; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:46; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 115–16. According to Ellingworth, in 1551 Sebastian Castellio's Latin Bible was the first to translate ἐπιλαμβάνεται as "help" (*opitulator*) in verse 16 (*Hebrews*, 177).

³⁰¹ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:46; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 118.

³⁰² E.g., Sampson, *Hebrews*, 104; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 55; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 56; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 36–37; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 24; Médebielle, "Hébreux," 301; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 66; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 63; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 87; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 102; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 157; Michaels, "Hebrews," 347.

“take hold of, grasp” something.³⁰³ Only once does ἐπιλαμβάνομαι appear to have a figurative meaning of “help” in the LXX (Sir 4:11). It is best to take the verb literally; Jesus takes hold of his followers on the way to glory with a view of rescuing them.³⁰⁴

Michael Gudorf offers a radically different interpretation.³⁰⁵ He argues that the verb ἐπιλαμβάνεται refers back to φόβῳ θανάτου in the previous verse. Hence, the idea is that the fear of death does not seize angels, but human beings. While this reading goes against the vast history of interpretation which sees Jesus as the subject of the verb ἐπιλαμβάνεται, Gudorf’s interpretation makes perfectly good sense here. Patrick Gray also favors this reading: “Contextually, the scales tip slightly toward ‘fear of death’ since this makes v. 16 consonant with the thrust of the passage as a whole as a characterization of the human condition entered into by Jesus rather than as an identification of those whom he saves.”³⁰⁶

A number of scholars have considered this interpretation only to reject it.³⁰⁷ First, Jesus is the subject of both the preceding (2:14b–15) and following verses (2:17–18). Second, in the only other occurrence of ἐπιλαμβάνομαι in Hebrews (8:9), the verb is found as part of the quotation of Jer 38:32 LXX. In the context of Jeremiah, the verb refers to God “taking hold of the hand” of the Israelites to lead them out of the land of Egypt; hence the verb may be associated with the notion of rescue or deliverance.³⁰⁸ Third, there are verbal and conceptual parallels to Isa 41:8–10 LXX which speak of taking hold of and helping the seed of Abraham.³⁰⁹

Gudorf’s interpretation certainly deserves consideration. If his reading is adopted, then the verse indirectly hints at one of the ways in which Jesus experiences the human condition; he too experienced the fear of death but he overcame it. If the majority interpretation is adopted, then here Jesus is described as one who rescues and delivers his followers from the fear of death.

³⁰³ “ἐπιλαμβάνομαι,” BAGD, 295.

³⁰⁴ So, Guers, *Hébreux*, 70; Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 135–36; Peterson, *Perfection*, 62; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 94; idem, “Liberating,” 108; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 215–16; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 203; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 66; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 116–17.

³⁰⁵ Michael E. Gudorf, “Through a Classical Lens: Hebrews 2:16,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 105–8. Albert Bonus, who also adopts this reading, claims that fourteen Peshitta Syriac manuscripts give the reading “fear of death” as the subject; see Albert Bonus, “Heb. ii. 16 in the Peshitta Syriac Version,” *ExpTim* 33 (1921): 234–36.

³⁰⁶ Gray, *Godly Fear*, 117.

³⁰⁷ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 36–37; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 178; Allen, *Hebrews*, 222–23; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 116–17n180.

³⁰⁸ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:64; Koester, *Hebrews*, 232.

³⁰⁹ Gray, *Godly Fear*, 117; Bell, “Deliver Us,” 300.

He Leads Humanity to Glory

Jesus helps lead humanity to glory (2:10). Technically, in this verse, it is God who leads humanity to glory.³¹⁰ The sentence is a bit cumbersome; the participle ἀγαγόντα agrees with τὸν ἀρχηγόν, but it probably does not go with it (since we would expect the article τὸν in front of the participle). Rather, it goes with the pronoun αὐτῷ, which refers to God. The participle is in the accusative case because the pronoun is the logical subject of the infinitive τελειῶσαι.³¹¹ Nevertheless, Jesus plays a role in leading humanity as their leader (ἀρχηγός).³¹² Here we see God and Jesus collaborate for the salvation of humanity. Later, we are told that Jesus gives them an eternal inheritance (9:15).

He Inaugurates a New and Living Way

In 10:20 the verb ἐγκαινίζω can variously be translated as “renew,” “restore,” “make new,” “innovate,” “inaugurate,” “dedicate,” or “consecrate.”³¹³ Since it involves a “new” (πρόσφατον) way, the translation “inaugurate” seems most appropriate since it suggests an initiation into something new. Jesus has opened up for believers a new way into the heavenly sanctuary (εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων; 10:19). The access into this heavenly sanctuary takes place through the veil by means of his flesh (διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ; 10:20).³¹⁴

³¹⁰ A few scholars believe that Jesus is the subject of the participle ἀγαγόντα; see Käsemann, *Wandering*, 143 n. 156; Hideyasu Nakagawa, “Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1955), 110–11; Du Plessis, *Perfection*, 219.

³¹¹ Peterson, *Perfection*, 56; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 82.

³¹² Westcott, *Hebrews*, 49; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 23.

³¹³ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 469; “ἐγκαινίζω,” BAGD, 215; H. Haarbeck et al., “New,” *NIDNTT* 2:670. These various meanings can be found in the LXX. The idea of “renew” is apparent in Ps 50:12 LXX (and likely in Isa 41:1; 45:16). The verb is used to describe the restoration of altars (2 Chr 15:8), gates (1 Macc 4:57), and walls (Isa 16:11). The verb means to “dedicate” or “consecrate” houses (Deut 20:5) or the temple (1 Kgs 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5). In 1 Maccabees (4:36, 54; 5:1) it can convey both the ideas of dedication and restoration of the temple. In Sir 36:5 “make new” (signs) seems to be the most appropriate meaning. The noun ἐγκαινισμός is frequently used to designate the dedication or restoration of an altar (Num 7:10, 11, 84; 2 Chr 7:9; 1 Macc 4:56, 59; 2 Macc 2:19) or temple (1 Esd 7:7; 2 Macc 2:9). The noun ἐγκαίνωσις is used for the dedication of the altar in Num 7:88.

³¹⁴ This last half of verse 20 has generated considerable controversy. Some scholars identify *flesh* (σαρκός) with *veil* (καταπετάσματος). The word order and the explanatory phrase τοῦτ’ ἔστιν favors this option. Jesus’ flesh had to be torn, just as the curtain was torn (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45), thus opening up access to God; see Davidson, *Hebrews*, 211–12; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 93; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 341; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 143; T. Robinson, *Hebrews*, 142; Leonard, *Authorship*, 73; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 345–46; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 67–68; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 161; Michel, *Hebräer*, 345; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 189; Thompson, “Outside the Camp,” 60; Morris, “Hebrews,” 103–4; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Living*

He Perfects and Sanctifies

Through his death, Jesus also perfects (10:14) and sanctifies (ἁγιάζω; 2:11; 10:10; 13:12) believers. The verb ἁγιάζω means “to make holy, consecrate, dedicate, sanctify, purify.”³¹⁵ The verb seems to have a primary meaning of dedicating or consecrating something or someone as belonging exclusively to God. Since persons set aside in service to God had to be without blemish and exemplify moral purity, a secondary meaning arises connoting to make holy, purify, or cleanse. In 2:11 Jesus is called “the one who sanctifies” (ὁ ἁγιάζων). In the LXX this designation was exclusively used for God.³¹⁶ O’Brien notes that “Jesus exercises the divine prerogative of sanctifying.”³¹⁷ Kistemaker points out that “Christ himself had to be ἅγιος

Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 110; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 287; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 189–90; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 164; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 252–53; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:110; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 57. Other scholars identify *flesh* with *way* (ὁδόν). Theological considerations favor this reading; it seems unlikely to construe Jesus’ flesh as an obstacle restricting access to God; see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 322; Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 113; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:316; Héring, *Hébreux*, 98; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 161; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 173; Andriessen and Lenglet, “Quelques passages,” 214; George W. MacRae, “Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 188; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 212; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 234; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 127. Some advocates of the first view, however, view the veil, not as an obstacle, but as the means of access to God’s presence; see Médebielle, “Hébreux,” 345; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 286–87; Schierse, *Verheissung*, 168–69; Laub, *Bekennnis*, 182–84; Peterson, *Perfection*, 154. D. Guthrie allows for this possibility. Nils Dahl identifies a functional equivalence between the veil and Jesus’ flesh. Both hide the sanctuary but both also provide access into the sanctuary; see his article, “A New and Living Way: The Approach to God According to Hebrews 10:19–25,” *Int* 5 (1951): 405. Related to this issue is the question of whether διὰ should be construed locally or instrumentally. The preposition clearly is local with respect to καταπετάσματος. While it would appear that the preposition must retain the same meaning for σαρκός as well, in recent years scholars are increasingly favoring a dual usage for διὰ in this context; see Frederic Gardiner, “Various Topics: On Heb. x. 20.—διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ’ ἔστι, τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,” *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 8 (1888): 142–46; Norman H. Young, “ΤΟΥΤ’ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΡΚΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ (Heb. X.20): Apposition, Dependent or Explicative?” *NTS* 20 (1973): 103–4; Peterson, *Perfection*, 154; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 525–26; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 520–21; Koester, *Hebrews*, 443; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 211; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 123; McKnight, “Hebrews,” 237; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 203; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 363; Allen, *Hebrews*, 514n18; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 470–71. Others argue for supplying a second διὰ; see Otfried Hofius, “Inkarnation und Opfertod Jesu nach Hebr 10,19f,” in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde: Exegetische Untersuchungen Joachim Jeremias zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Schülern* (eds. Eduard Lohse with Christoph Burchard and Berndt Schaller; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 136–37; idem, *Vorhang*, 81–82; Joachim Jeremias, “Hebräer 10,20: τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,” *ZNW* 62 (1971): 131; Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation,” 353–55; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:275, 284; Cortez, “Anchor,” 419.

³¹⁵ “ἁγιάζω,” BAGD 8–9.

³¹⁶ Exod 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32; Ezek 20:12; 37:28.

³¹⁷ O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 108.

in order to be able to function as the ἀγιάζων.³¹⁸ Believers are designated as “those who are sanctified” (οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι). As D. Guthrie remarks, “when [Jesus] sanctifies others he is leading them into an experience through which he himself has passed.”³¹⁹ In this verse Jesus, who sanctifies, and believers, who are sanctified by Jesus, share a common origin (ἐξ ἐνὸς πάντες).³²⁰ This commonality demonstrates in part Jesus’ solidarity with humanity. Moreover, the present tenses indicate that this relationship is ongoing and continual. Closely connected with sanctification is the idea of perfection (10:14). Since Jesus was perfected (2:10; 5:9; 7:28), he is able to become the perfecter of faith (12:2). Neither the priesthood (7:11), nor the law (7:19; 10:1), nor gifts and sacrifices (9:9; 10:1) are able to perfect the believer; only Jesus can accomplish this deed. Commenting on 10:14 deSilva remarks that “In terms of epideictic topics, the author is again underscoring

³¹⁸ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 100.

³¹⁹ D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 90.

³²⁰ The phrase ἐξ ἐνὸς has been interpreted in various ways. Many scholars interpret it theologically; Jesus and humanity have a common origin in God; see McLean, *Hebrews*, 70; Stuart, *Hebrews*, 297; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 91; Willibald Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology or Historical Account of the Teaching of Jesus and of Primitive Christianity according to the New Testament Sources* (2 vols.; trans. Neil Buchanan; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 2:309–1011; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 50; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 22; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:41; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 112; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 62; Michel, *Hebräer*, 150; Friedrich Doormann, “Deinen Namen will ich meinen Brüdern verkünden (Hebr 2,11–13),” *BibLeb* 14 (1973): 249; Peterson, *Perfection*, 60; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 90; Braun, *Hebräer*, 60; Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 59–60; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 58; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 75; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 88–89; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:123; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:135; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:58; Craddock, “Hebrews,” 40; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 114; McCruden, “Christ’s Perfection,” 46; Karrer, *Hebräer*, 1:175; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 74; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 21–22; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 346; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 109; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 140–41. Other scholars have interpreted it anthropologically. This option has several possibilities. The word ἐνὸς may be neuter referring to a word like αἵματος, σπέρματος, or γένους; see J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 115–16; Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ*, 334; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 105. If ἐνὸς is masculine, it may refer to an individual human such as (1) Adam, having a common humanity; see Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 51; Jean-Samuel Javet, *Dieu nous parla: Commentaire sur l’épître aux Hébreux* (Les livres de la Bible 3; Paris: Editions “Je Sers,” 1941), 37; Héring, *Hébreux*, 19; Antony Snell, *New and Living Way: An Explanation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Faith Press, 1959), 65; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 84–85; Morris, “Hebrews,” 27; André Feuillet, “Le dialogue avec le monde non-chrétien dans les Épîtres Pastorales et l’Épître aux Hébreux. Deuxième partie: l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *EsprVie* 98 (1988): 158; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 154; Moffitt, “Way,” 170–72; Thiele, “From Son to High Priest,” 202–4; or (2) Abraham, having a common spiritual heritage; see B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology*, 2:186n5; Buchanan, *Challenge from Zion*, 87; Fritz Laubach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (3d ed.; Wuppertaler Studienbibel; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1974), 66; Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 134; Rissi, *Theologie*, 60, 120; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 89; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 97–98. While the ambiguity should be noted, ἐνὸς is best construed as referring to God. See Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 164–65) for the pros and cons of each position.

Jesus' honor and the nobility of his achievement, since he performed it first, alone, and completely."³²¹

He Was Raised from the Dead

Death was not the end of the line for Jesus. The author continues to praise Jesus for deeds that he accomplishes after his death. Jesus is first resurrected from the dead by God (13:20). This is the only explicit reference to Jesus' resurrection in the book of Hebrews, but it also must be implicit anytime the author talks about Jesus' entrance into heaven (4:14; 6:20; 9:11–12, 24; 10:20) or sitting at the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). The author does not employ any of the usual words for resurrection (i.e., ἀνίστημι, ἐγείρω).³²² Instead, the author uses ἀνάγω, which is more consistent with the language of exaltation.³²³ The author much prefers exaltation language and we must assume that the resurrection is inherent in the author's conception of exaltation. It is implicit in the verse that Jesus' resurrection was for the benefit of others; Jesus was the great shepherd whose resurrection brings benefits to his sheep.

He Entered the Heavenly Realm/Appeared before God

Numerous times the author tells us that Jesus has entered the heavenly realm (4:14; 6:19–20; 9:11–12, 24). In 9:11 it says that Jesus entered “through the greater and [more] perfect tent” (διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς). Some scholars interpret the tent symbolically as representing the body of Jesus in some manner. They argue that διὰ should be instrumental as it is in the following verse (9:12).³²⁴ More likely, διὰ should be taken

³²¹ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 324.

³²² Some scholars, however, see a veiled allusion to Jesus' resurrection in 7:11, 15 where a form of ἀνίστημι is used; see Kurianal, *Jesus*, 111; Koester, *Hebrews*, 353; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 187; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 258; Moffitt, “Another Priest,” 78–79; idem, “Way,” 266; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 213. The verb ἀνίστημι (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; 16:9; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 46; John 20:9; Acts 2:24, 32; 3:22; 7:37; 10:41; 13:33–34; 17:3, 31; 1 Thess 4:14) and its corresponding noun, ἀνάστασις (Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 26:23; Rom 1:4; 6:5; 1 Cor 15:12; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 1:3; 3:21) are frequently used in the NT to refer to Jesus' resurrection.

³²³ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 406. The only other place where ἀνάγω is used of resurrection is found in Rom 10:7.

³²⁴ Chrysostom, Theodoret, Oecumenius, Augustine, Ambrose, Estius, Calvin, Theodore Beza, Grotius, Calmet, and Bengel all held this view, according to Spicq (*Hébreux*, 2:256). Modern interpreters construe the tent as Jesus' human body (Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 383–84; Hugedé, *Sacerdoce*, 127–31), his entire human life (Schierse, *Verheissung*, 57; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 161–65; Laub, *Bekenntnis*, 190), his resurrected body (Albert Vanhoye, “Par la tente plus grande et plus parfaite . . .,” *Bib* 46 [1965]: 22–28; idem, *La structure littéraire de*

locally. The participle παραγενόμενος suggests movement. Moreover, it is not unusual to use the same preposition in two different senses in the same sentence. Jesus has entered the celestial sanctuary.³²⁵ The aorist tense (εἰσῆλθεν), together with the temporal adverb (ἐφάπαξ) indicates an unrepeatable act.

In 4:14 it says that Jesus passed *through* (διεληλυθότα) the heavens (τοὺς οὐρανοὺς). The plural is used elsewhere (7:26; 8:1; 9:23; 12:23, 25) and may be an assimilation to the Jewish word מַלְאָכָא,³²⁶ or it may reflect the Jewish belief in multiple heavens.³²⁷ The point of the passage, though, is not the number of heavens nor the process but the end result: Jesus' exalted status.³²⁸ He is now "exalted above" (ὑψηλότερος) the heavens (7:26) and seated at the right hand of God (8:1). Jesus is described as the forerunner into heaven, thus emphasizing that he is the one who makes the way for the believer to enter into heaven (6:20). Having entered into heaven, Jesus now has the privileged position of being in the presence of God (8:1; 9:24). Jesus' appearance before God, however, is not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of humanity (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; 9:24).

l'Épître aux Hébreux [StudNeot 1; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963], 157n1; Smith, *Priest For Ever*, 110–11), his eucharistic body (James Swetnam, "The Greater and More Perfect Tent. A Contribution to the Discussion of Hebrews 9,11," *Bib* 47 [1966]: 97–101, 104–6), or the church as the body of Christ (Westcott, *Hebrews*, 258–60; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 213). Sabourin sees the tent as the "new sacrificial liturgy" of the new covenant (*Priesthood*, 201–2). See the fuller critique of these views by Attridge, (*Hebrews*, 245–47).

³²⁵ So, Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:256; Koester, "Outside the Camp," 309; Michel, *Hebräer*, 311; Walter Edward Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 89 (1970): 210; Paul Andriessen, "Das grössere und vollkommene Zelt (Hebr 9,11)," *BZ* 15 (1971): 76–92; Hofius, *Vorhang*, 65–67; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews. Part III: The Meaning of 'the True Tent' and 'the Greater and More Perfect Tent,'" *BSac* 130 (1973): 311–14; James W. Thompson, "Hebrews 9 and Hellenistic Concepts of Sacrifice," *JBL* 98 (1979): 571; Peterson, *Perfection*, 143; Braun, *Hebräer*, 265; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 185–86; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 245–47; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:77–79; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:236–38; Lindars, *Theology*, 94; Sakae Kubo, "Hebrews 9:11–12: Christ's Body, Heavenly Region, or . . . ?" in *Scribes and Scripture: New Testament Essays in Honor of J. Harold Greenlee* (ed. David Alan Black; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 97–109; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 57; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 450; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 310; Allen, *Hebrews*, 470; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 320; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 90–93. While C. Koester believes that διὰ should be taken instrumentally, he still argues that *tent* refers to the heavenly sanctuary (*Hebrews*, 108–9; see also Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 152–53).

³²⁶ So, Hughes, *Hebrews*, 170; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 120; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 115.

³²⁷ Isaacs explains that in Jewish literature the number of heavens varies: "They can be two (2 *Enoch* 7:1), three (2 *Enoch* 8:1; cf. 2 Cor 12:2–4), five (3 *Baruch* 11:1), seven (3 *Enoch* 1–2; 17:1–3) or ten (4 *Enoch* 20)" (*Reading Hebrews*, 68).

³²⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 139; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:197; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 90; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 267; Koester, *Hebrews*, 282; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 105.

Considerable controversy has been generated over the meaning of the introductory formula in 1:6 (ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην). The interpretation of the passage centers around two interpretive cruxes. The first issue concerns the placement of the adverb πάλιν. Some interpreters prefer to attach πάλιν to the verb that immediately follows it: εἰσαγάγῃ. The NASB reflects this reading: "And when He again brings the firstborn into the world." The second option is that πάλιν modifies λέγει or is a connective that introduces another quotation that comes in quick succession. This alternative is quite consistent with the author's quotation practice (see 1:5; 2:13; 4:5; 10:30). The NRSV reflects this reading: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world." Scholars who attach πάλιν to εἰσαγάγῃ usually interpret this as an allusion to Jesus' parousia, his second coming into the world.³²⁹ The problem with this interpretation is that there is nothing in the wider context of chapter 1 that suggests this interpretation. Grässer also argues that it is not possible to equate πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ with ἐκ δευτέρου . . . ὁφθῆσεται (9:28).³³⁰ "Appearing" or "coming" is the standard picture for the parousia.³³¹ Moreover, the angels are usually depicted as accompanying Jesus as an entourage and not as a singing host.³³² Some older interpreters construe the verb εἰσαγάγῃ to mean "introduce" and that it alludes to prior introductions of Jesus to the world through the OT Scriptures. Moses Stuart represents this position.³³³

³²⁹ E.g., Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:67; Davidson, *Hebrews*, 47; Lowrie, *Hebrews*, 20; Moll, *Hebrews*, 37; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 8; B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology*, 2:232; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 21; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 22; Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 13; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 18; Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, 206; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 79; Héring, *Hébreux*, 25; Ragnar Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 181; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 56; Michel, *Hebräer*, 113; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 51; Loader, *Sohn*, 24–25; Braun, *Hebräer*, 36; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 52; Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "The Warning Passages in Hebrews Part 1: The Eschatological Salvation of Hebrews 1:5–2:5," *BSac* 145 (1988): 86–87; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 23; Mark Saucy, "Exaltation Christology in Hebrews: What Kind of Reign?," *TJ* 14 (1993): 54; Ron Kangas, "The Heavenly Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *A&C* 3 (1998): 7; Michaels, "Hebrews," 333, 336. Among ancient interpreters Jerome and Gregory of Nyssa supported this view, according to Hughes (*Hebrews*, 58).

³³⁰ Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:78; see also Schierse, *Verheissung*, 94–95.

³³¹ *Coming*: John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 4:5; 11:26; Rev 22:20. *Appearing/Revealing*: Matt 24:30; Luke 17:30; 1 Cor 1:7; Col 3:4; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Pet 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2. "Epiphany" language is also used: 2 Thess 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

³³² Matt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 19:14.

³³³ Stuart, *Hebrews*, 274. Sampson also holds this view and claims that this was the "common interpretation" of the time (*Hebrews*, 65); see also Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 59; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 39.

But a re-examination of this whole subject has now led me to believe, that the laws of exegesis here require us to understand the writer as referring to something said in the *Old Testament* concerning Christ, inasmuch as he classes the words to follow, with other citations from the same Scriptures. On the same ground, also, I must now understand εἰσαγγήγῃ as referring to an introduction of the Saviour into the world, which is described in the *Old Testament* Scriptures, and not to his actual introduction itself, considered simply as a historical fact.

This suggestion is quite vague and scholars who offer this interpretation rarely give us any hint of what Scripture passage(s) the author may have had in mind.

The majority of more recent interpreters, however, construe πάλιν as merely introducing the quotation.³³⁴ The word order is not problematic for this interpretation. Scholars who favor this option then have to deal with a second interpretive crux: the interpretation of οἰκουμένη. This substantival participle came to have a specialized meaning referring to the “inhabited world,” the world as inhabited by human beings. The common usage of this word has led many scholars to surmise that the author is referring to the incarnation, Jesus’ first entry into the inhabited world.³³⁵ This interpretation finds affinities with Luke 2:13–14 in which the angels

³³⁴ Even if πάλιν modifies εἰσαγγήγῃ, one could construe the passage as a reference to Jesus’ return to the heavenly realm (Cortez, “Anchor,” 217; Moffitt, “Way,” 73). The adverb πάλιν can also have a spatial connotation, “back,” with verbs of motion (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1292).

³³⁵ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 10–11; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 6; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, “The Gospel in the Old Testament according to Hebrews,” *Theology* 52 (1949): 249; Teodorico, *Ebrei*, 49; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:17; Synge, *Scriptures*, 4; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 45; Albert Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη dans l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *Bib* 45 (1964): 253; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 245–46; Paul Andriessen, “La teneur Judéo-Chrétienne de He I 6 et II 14B–III 2,” *NovT* 18 (1976): 293–313; Thompson, “Catena,” 356n18; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 74; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 38; Meier, “Symmetry,” 507–8; J. Daryl. Charles, “The Angels, Sonship and Birthright in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *JETS* 33 (1990): 177; Lindars, *Theology*, 34; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 225n96; Anderson, *King-Priest*, 151; Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 116; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 64–65; McKnight, “Hebrews,” 48; Scott Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2/223; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 43; Cortez, “Anchor,” 219–24; Ardel B. Caneday, “The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The Οἰκουμένη of Hebrews 1.6 and the Son’s Enthronement” in *Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 29, 36; Moffitt, “Way,” 74–89; Joshua W. Jipp, “The Son’s Entrance into the Heavenly World: The Soteriological Necessity of the Scriptural Catena in Hebrews 1.5–14,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 562. Ancient interpreters who supported this view include Chrysostom and Alcuin, according to Hughes (*Hebrews*, 58). Bateman is unique in identifying Jesus’ baptism as the time when God introduces the Son into the world (*Hermeneutics*, 222); cf. Matt 3:16–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22.

break into praise at the announcement of Jesus' birth. The problem with this view is: (1) in Luke it is not Jesus, but God, who is praised at the birth of Jesus; (2) at his incarnation Jesus was made temporarily lower than the angels (2:5–9), so the angels would not worship one who had a lower status than they. Many recent scholars, however, have argued that οἰκουμένη refers rather to the future, heavenly world.³³⁶ This interpretation finds support in 2:5 where the author refers to the “coming world” (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν).³³⁷ Attridge contends that οἰκουμένη need not mean the same thing in the two passages,³³⁸ but the close proximity of the two occurrences, plus the statement “about which we are speaking” (2:5) hints that the author has the prior occurrence in mind.³³⁹ Another clue in favor of this reading is that, in the one clear reference to the incarnation (10:5), a different word for “world” (κόσμος) is used. Scholars who favor this latter interpretation, then, argue that the reference is to Jesus' exaltation/enthronement when he enters into the heavenly world.³⁴⁰ This last interpretation seems to be best in light of the overall context of chapter 1 which is replete with royal enthronement language. The angels are commanded to worship Jesus upon his installment as king.

Another question is whether 4:10 refers to Jesus' entry into the heavenly world: ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός. Since the subject of the sentence is singular it is possible to construe the passage as referring either to Jesus or to the individual believer generally. The NASB retains the ambiguity of the verse: “For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His.” The NRSV has obscured the ambiguity by translating the passage with plural prepositions: “for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.” Most scholars interpret this passage as a general reference to believers.

³³⁶ This οἰκουμένη could refer to the inhabitants of the heavenly Zion mentioned in 12:22–23. So, Meier, “Symmetry,” 507; Tetley, “Priesthood,” 154.

³³⁷ Lowrie construes this to refer to the future inhabited world at the time of Jesus' second coming (*Hebrews*, 20).

³³⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56.

³³⁹ So, Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:27.

³⁴⁰ McLean, *Hebrews*, 31; Tholuck, *Hebräer*, 123; Milligan, *Theology*, 87n3; Schierse, *Verheissung*, 94–96; Morris, “Hebrews,” 18; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:82; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:78; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:27; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 162–64; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 67–68, 97; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 117; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 97; Koester, *Hebrews*, 192; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 48; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 27; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 79; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 128–29; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 54; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 69; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 81; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 200–204; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 104.

But some scholars see this passage as a veiled reference to Jesus.³⁴¹ Ebrard, for example, argues that the name Ἰησοῦς was not used because that is also the name for *Joshua*, who was mentioned in 4:8.³⁴² Attridge remains open to the possibility: “Although he is never explicitly described as entering the rest, his exalted position, seated at the right hand of God, will later be contrasted with constant activity of the priests of the old covenant.”³⁴³ If this view is accepted, then we have a brief synkrisis comparing Joshua, who was unable to bring rest to the people of God, and Jesus who *was* able to bring them rest. Such a construal accords well with other passages that talk about Jesus helping to lead many sons to glory (2:10) or that he was a forerunner into heaven (6:20). Nevertheless, it is more likely that the verse refers to believers in general. Bénétreau offers two reasons to dismiss the christological view: “1) le contexte immédiat s’intéresse aux conditions d’entrée dans le repos pour les croyants et non pour le Christ; 2) dans l’épître, la session céleste du Christ est décrite en termes d’office sacerdotal ou de privilège royal et non pas en termes de repos.”³⁴⁴

He Is Crowned as King/Is Seated at the Right Hand of God

Jesus also assumes his royal role. He takes his place seated at the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), where he is crowned with glory and honor (2:9). The “right hand” is symbolic, denoting a position of honor, dignity, privilege, and favor. It also indicates that Jesus participates in the divine dominion, authority, and power. Moreover, sitting indicates the completion of his work of redemption (1:3; 10:12).³⁴⁵ As Hughes observes,

³⁴¹ Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 155; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 210; Paul Andriessen and A. Lenglet, *De Brief aan de Hebreëën* (Het Nieuwe Testament; Roermond: Romen & Zonen, 1971), 75; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 142; Sabourin, *Priesthood*, 204; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 360; Schierse, *Verheissung*, 134–35; Vanhoye, *Structure*, 99–100; Bryan J. Whitfield, “The Three Joshuas of Hebrews 3 and 4,” *PRSt* 37 (2010): 26–27. Andriessen and Lenglet give the most detailed argumentation for this view, but each of their points is ably critiqued by Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 255–57).

³⁴² Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 155.

³⁴³ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 131–32. See also deSilva (*Perseverance*, 167–68) who also argues for the possibility of a christological reading.

³⁴⁴ Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:175.

³⁴⁵ The prepositional phrase εἰς τὸ διηνεκές in 10:12 may go with what precedes, προσενέγκας, or with what follows, ἐκάθισεν. If it goes with προσενέγκας, the perpetual effects of Jesus’ sacrifice are in view. If it goes with ἐκάθισεν, the perpetuity of Jesus’ exaltation is indicated. The contrast to verse 11 is either to the priestly sacrifices that are offered often (πολλάκις) or to the priest’s daily (καθ’ ἡμέραν) standing. Hence, either option would make good sense. Those preferring the second option point to the analogous passages in 7:3, 24, 28 where Jesus’ priesthood is perpetual. But it may be countered that εἰς τὸ διηνεκές usually

the heavenly session “signifies the completion of the work of purification, conveying the notion of rest after the fulfillment of a mission.”³⁴⁶ By contrast, the Levitical priests remain standing for their sacrificial ministry which never comes to an end (10:11–14).

Twice the author of Hebrews quotes Ps 2:7 LXX which states that God has begotten (γενένηκα) Jesus (1:5; 5:5).³⁴⁷ The verb γεννάω means “to become the father of, to beget,” but it is unlikely that the verb should be taken literally here. Psalm 2 is most likely an enthronement psalm sung on the occasion of the coronation of a king or perhaps on the anniversary of the king’s accession to the throne.³⁴⁸ The decree of God, “You are my son; today I have begotten you,” must then be taken in a more figurative sense. It is on the occasion of the king’s accession to the throne that God declares that the king is his son. The psalm of course is picked up in the NT as a messianic psalm. In Acts 13:33 the psalm is quoted in conjunction with the mention of Jesus’ resurrection. It seems to have a similar connotation in Hebrews. Following the flow of the passage, we note that Jesus inherited a greater name than the angels (1:4) only after he sat down at the right hand of God (1:3). The catena of quotations, then, is ostensibly part of a coronation hymn on the occasion of the enthronement of the Son. The quotation implies a couple of things about Jesus’ character. First, it implies the intimate relationship that Jesus has with God. Second, it implies that God finds Jesus worthy of his trust.

follows the verbal it modifies and it is used in connection with offerings in 10:1, 14. Those favoring the first option include Tholuck, *Hebräer*, 346; Peake, *Hebrews*, 200; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 316; Médebielle, “Hébreux,” 344; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:309; Héring, *Hébreux*, 96; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 169; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 401; Morris, “Hebrews,” 100; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 207; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 244–46; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:256 note z, 267; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 328; Koester, *Hebrews*, 430; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 253–54; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 203; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 280; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 355. Those favoring the second option include Bleek, *Hebräer* 2.2:650–51; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 306; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 140; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 158; Michel, *Hebräer*, 340; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 165; idem, *Challenge*, 308; Jewett, *Letter*, 166; Braun, *Hebräer*, 301; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 280; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:103; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:229; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 512–13; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 509–10; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 322–23. It seems more natural to take the prepositional phrase with the preceding verbal, but a decision either way is not crucial since both the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice and his exalted position at the right hand of God are perpetual.

³⁴⁶ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 47. The notion of completion is implied at 1:3; 10:12; and 12:2.

³⁴⁷ It is possible that the larger context of Ps 109 LXX, verse 1 of which is quoted in 1:13, suggested itself to the mind of the author. In verse 3 we find the expression “I have begotten you before the morning star” (πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐξεγέννησά σε); see Strobel, *Hebräer*, 22.

³⁴⁸ Weiser, *Psalms*, 109; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:63; Kidner, *Psalms* 1–72, 50; Craigie, *Psalms*, 64; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 8.

He Is Anointed

Jesus is also anointed beyond his companions (1:9). There have been various lines of interpretation of this passage. The first view takes the anointing as something that took place in eternity past, perhaps as an expression of the eternal divine generation of the Son.³⁴⁹ The second view sees it as the anointing of the Holy Spirit at the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry.³⁵⁰ Jesus applied the words of Isa 61:1 ("The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me . . .") to himself (Luke 4:18–21; cf. Acts 10:38), following the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22). The third view sees the anointing as the consecration of Jesus as king upon his accession to the throne.³⁵¹ The fourth view takes it simply as a festive occasion in which oil was poured over the head of honored guests (Ps 23:5; Isa 61:3; Matt 6:17; Luke 7:46).³⁵² The emphasis of this interpretation is on the gladness (ἑλαίον ἀγαλλιάσεως) of the occasion. Allen, for example, avers that it is "symbolic of the Son's eternal supreme joy."³⁵³ In support of this view is the fact that the psalm was sung on the occasion of a royal wedding, not at the occasion of the coronation of a king. Nevertheless, since the quotation has been removed from its original context and placed into a new rhetorical situation, it seems best to view this quotation as the consecration of Jesus as king upon the occasion of his enthronement. This fits in with the rest of the context of chapter 1. The author amplifies the anointing of Jesus in a couple of ways. First, Jesus is anointed by God, denoting great privilege and favor. Héring makes the interesting comment that "le Christ n'est pas un usurpateur (comme Zeus, qui détrône son père), mais qu'il est oint par Dieu."³⁵⁴ Second, he is anointed beyond (παρά) his companions. Third, he is anointed because he

³⁴⁹ Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 196; Michaels, "Hebrews," 338.

³⁵⁰ MacKnight, *Epistles*, 40. This is the traditional interpretation throughout church history (Michel, *Hebräer*, 119; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 45).

³⁵¹ McLean, *Hebrews*, 37; Stuart, *Hebrews*, 278; Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:66; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 19; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:19; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 58; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 60; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 99; Koester, *Hebrews*, 195; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 49; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 80.

³⁵² Sampson, *Hebrews*, 71; Moll, *Hebrews*, 25; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 25; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 27; Wickham, *Hebrews*, 8–9; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 14; Bernes Selph, "The Christology of the Book of Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949), 34; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 61; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 77; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 44; Meier, "Symmetry," 515; Oberholtzer, "Eschatological Salvation," 90; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 61; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 74; Allen, *Hebrews*, 180.

³⁵³ Allen, *Hebrews*, 180.

³⁵⁴ Héring, *Hébreux*, 26.

loved righteousness.³⁵⁵ DeSilva explains that the “Son’s elevation is based not merely on filial connections with the Almighty but also on the nobility of the Son, who has exhibited the virtue of wholehearted commitment to justice and abhorrence of vice. The OT thus becomes a character witness for Jesus, presenting his exaltation as the just reward for his noble character, which God thus acknowledges.”³⁵⁶

Who are the μέτοχοι referred to here? There are a number of possibilities: (1) *other earthly rulers and kings*:³⁵⁷ this is the likely meaning in the original context, but with the quotation placed into a new rhetorical context, it is likely that the author has someone else in mind. (2) *Christian believers*:³⁵⁸ this option finds support within Hebrews itself; several times Christians believers are referred to as μέτοχοι (3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8). Jesus also calls fellow believers “brothers” (2:11–12). (3) *Angels*:³⁵⁹ some have objected that this option is not warranted because Jesus is not an angel and angels are never called his companions. However, in the immediate context this option seems best, since the whole point of the catena is to show the superiority of Jesus to the angels.

He Is Made Heir of All Things

Jesus becomes the heir of all things (1:2) and inherits a greater name than the angels (1:4). Jesus is given universal lordship or dominion over all things. The phrase “all things” (πάντων) indicates that his dominion is without limitation or restriction. The fact that God appointed Jesus as heir

³⁵⁵ Some scholars see this as a reference to Jesus’ life and ministry which was characterized by righteousness (Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 57; Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ*, 186–88; Meier, “Symmetry,” 515; Harris, “Translation,” 159; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 55). Bénétreau, by contrast, argues that “Dans la ligne du Ps 45 lui-même, c’est bien l’excellence de l’attitude fondamentale du roi-Messie qui est proclamée, plutôt qu’un exploit particulier” (*Hébreux*, 1:86).

³⁵⁶ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 99.

³⁵⁷ Stuart, *Hebrews*, 278; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 53; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 80; Moll, *Hebrews*, 39; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 20.

³⁵⁸ Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:68–69; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 23; Selph, “Christology,” 34; Morris, “Hebrews,” 19; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 44; Oberholtzer, “Eschatological Salvation,” 88–89; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 61; Koester, *Hebrews*, 195; Moffitt, “Way,” 62n4; 162; Allen, *Hebrews*, 181.

³⁵⁹ McLean, *Hebrews*, 37–38; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 16; Héring, *Hébreux*, 26; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 58; Kistemaker, *Psalms Citations*, 79; de Jonge and van der Woude, “1QMelchizedek,” 316; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 61; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 66; Braun, *Hebräer*, 40–41; Meier, “Symmetry,” 516; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:86–87; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:30; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:86; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 24; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 166; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 121n188; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 229; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 85.

of all things indicates the dependability and ability of Jesus. He is able to be responsible with the inheritance with which he has been entrusted.

Scholars have been considerably divided (and undecided) about the time *when* Jesus is appointed heir of all things. Was Jesus appointed heir of all things by the eternal decree of God before the creation of the world? Or was he appointed heir of all things upon his exaltation after he had made atonement for sins? Fred Craddock represents the first view when he says, "As for the Son, 'heir of all things' describes his pre-existent life with God."³⁶⁰ Yet Craddock issues a caveat:

Perhaps it is not too soon to become alert to a tension in the christology of Hebrews (which the author does not attempt to resolve) between what the Son has in pre-existence and what the Son gains by reason of his work of redemption and exaltation to God's right hand. In other words, is his last state a return to the first or is the last greater than the first?³⁶¹

Peter O'Brien expresses the latter view:

The verb *appointed*... does not suggest that any particular time is intended, while there are no temporal markers in the clause itself. An older view regarded the expression as referring to the eternal declaration of God. But this does not fit the immediate context or the general thrust of Hebrews... On the whole, it seems best to understand the Son's appointment as heir when he was exalted at the right hand, that is, after he made purification for sins.³⁶²

But perhaps it is not a question of either/or but both/and that best resolves the problem. Jesus was appointed as heir of all things by the eternal decree of God, but Jesus did not actually enter into his inheritance until after his exaltation. Ironically, then, Jesus does not receive his inheritance until after *his own* death!³⁶³

He Is Worshiped by the Angels

Jesus receives worship from the angels upon his entry into the heavenly world (1:6).³⁶⁴ The fact that the angels are commanded by God to worship Jesus signifies that Jesus himself is God.

³⁶⁰ Craddock, "Hebrews," 22.

³⁶¹ Craddock, "Hebrews," 22.

³⁶² O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 52 (italics his); so also, Milligan, *Theology*, 86; MacNeill, *Christology*, 56; John P. Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1-14," *Bib* 66 (1985): 176.

³⁶³ Koester, *Hebrews*, 178; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 102.

³⁶⁴ The quotation that follows appears to be taken from Deut 32:43 LXX, or less likely, Ps 96:7 LXX. The uncertainty of the source of the citation stems from the fact that the

He Is Victorious over His Enemies/Subdues All Things

Twice the author tells us that Jesus' enemies will be made a footstool for his feet (1:13; 10:13). The metaphor comes from the ancient custom of placing one's feet on the necks of one's conquered enemies in token of their complete subjugation (Josh 10:24). Jesus apparently does not take an active part in the subduing of his enemies; instead it is God who subjects the enemies to him.³⁶⁵ The enemies of Jesus are not explicitly identified in these verses, but they may include the devil (2:14), and human beings who oppose (12:3) and reject him (10:29).

A similar idea is expressed in 2:8 where it says that "all things" (πάντα) are subjected under Jesus' feet. In the original context of Ps 8 LXX, πάντα was qualified by the reference to the animals (vv. 8–9); humanity was given complete dominion over the animals. However, by not quoting verses 8–9 of Ps 8, the author is able to expand on the meaning of πάντα.³⁶⁶ The author is able to reinforce the *completeness* of the subjection through the repeated use of ὑποτάσσω and its related forms (ὑπέταξας, ὑποτάξαι, ἀνυπότακτον, ὑποτεταγμένα).³⁶⁷ Lane observes that the author further underscores "the absoluteness of the language by resorting to a double usage of the negative: God, in determining to put everything (τὰ πάντα) in subjection, left nothing (οὐδέν) that was not under his control (ἀνυπότακτον)."³⁶⁸ All of these things indicate Jesus' royal dignity and power.

quotation in Hebrews corresponds to no known extant version. Setting the verses side by side demonstrates this fact:

προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ (Heb 1:6)

προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ (Deut 32:43 LXX)

προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ (Ps 96:7 LXX)

A quick perusal of these verses demonstrates that the quotation in Heb 1:6 most closely conforms to Deut 32:43 LXX with the exception that ἄγγελοι has replaced υἱοί. It is possible that Ps 96:7 LXX has influenced this reading, or it is possible that the quotation has been assimilated to a later line in Deut 32:43 LXX, which reads: ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ. It is also possible that the author of Hebrews is quoting from a *Vorlage* which is no longer extant. At any rate, the sentiment in either source is the same: angels are commanded to worship God. The author of Hebrews now, however, applies the verse to Jesus; the angels are urged to worship the Son. Attridge suggests that the removal of the quotation from its original context made the αὐτῷ ambiguous, allowing the author to apply the verse to Jesus (*Hebrews*, 57).

³⁶⁵ Leivestad, *Conqueror*, 182.

³⁶⁶ Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 131.

³⁶⁷ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 109.

³⁶⁸ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:47.

He Was Appointed as High Priest

Often tabernacle imagery is used when discussing Jesus' entry into the heavenly realm (6:19; 9:11–12, 24), thus emphasizing his high priestly role. Several times we are told that Jesus was appointed or designated as high priest by God (3:1–2; 5:5–6, 10; 6:20; 9:11; cf. 7:16, 21).³⁶⁹ This appointment as high priest appears to be simultaneous with his coronation as royal Son (5:5–6).³⁷⁰ Jesus did not glorify (δοξάζω) himself by assuming the role of high priest (5:5), thus suggesting Jesus' humility. Nevertheless, the fact that God did appoint him indicates that God deemed him worthy to receive this office.

He Helps/Sympathizes with/Intercedes for Humanity

As the heavenly high priest, Jesus is now in the presence of God on behalf of humanity (9:24). In this position he is able to give aid (βοηθῆσαι) to humanity (2:18; cf. 4:16: βοήθειαν), sympathize (συμπαθεῖν) with their weaknesses (4:15), and intercede (ἐντυγχάνειν) for them (7:25). In 2:18 Jesus' ability to help humanity arises from his shared experience of temptation and suffering. This shared experience also enables Jesus to sympathize with human weaknesses (ἀσθενεῖν). These weaknesses likely include all human frailties, including moral, social, and physical limitations.³⁷¹ It is likely that Jesus' ability to sympathize is contrasted with the Levitical

³⁶⁹ The verb ποιήσαντι in 3:2 is a matter of some controversy. Patristic writers attributed the verb to the making or creating of Jesus' humanity. This interpretation has been followed by several modern (mostly German) interpreters (Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 30; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 29; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 90; Braun, *Hebräer*, 79; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 88; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 38–39; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:165; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 107). Strobel says "Das Verhältnis des Sohnes zum Vater wird dabei als das Verhältnis des Geschöpfes zum Schöpfer bestimmt, was für den Verfasser kein Widerspruch zu anderen hochgestimmten Aussagen über den Sohn als Schöpfungsmittler ist" (*Hebräer* 38–39). Johnson argues that the whole point of chapter 2 is to demonstrate the creaturely status of Jesus. Many other interpreters, however, take ποιήσαντι in the sense of installing or appointing to an office. Vaughan explains that the verb means "to make or create an official person" (*Hebrews*, 59; italics his). Such a usage finds precedence in 1 Sam 12:6 LXX where God appointed (ποίησας) Moses and Aaron. See also Mark 3:14 where Jesus appoints the twelve disciples. Scholars who favor this interpretation include: Sampson, *Hebrews*, 117; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 156–57; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 76; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 42; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:66; Héring, *Hébreux*, 38; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 130; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 246; Koester, *Hebrews*, 244; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 81; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 139; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 131.

³⁷⁰ So understood by Käsemann, *Wandering*, 218; Hay, *Glory*, 145; Thompson, "Catena," 355; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:118; and Allen, *Hebrews*, 319.

³⁷¹ See Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 93; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 101; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 140; Koester, *Hebrews*, 283; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 141. Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 268) and Craddock ("Hebrews," 58) deny that the term includes physical weaknesses.

priests' abilities. The author also says that the Levitical high priest "is able to deal gently [μετριοπαθεῖν] with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness [περίκειται ἀσθενείαν]" (5:2). The verb μετριοπαθέω literally means, "to moderate one's passions or feelings." Hewitt explains that "There should be no lack of feeling on the part of the high priest for those who have fallen into error and sin, nor should he be unduly disturbed, otherwise he may fail to bear gently with them. This feeling of moderation should arise naturally from a knowledge of his own sinful weaknesses."³⁷² Attridge highlights the contrast well: "The ordinary high priest controls his anger; Christ actively sympathizes."³⁷³ Jesus' sympathy with humanity translates into his intercession (ἐντυγχάνω) for them (7:25). According to Koester, intercession includes two aspects: pleas for assistance and pleas for forgiveness.³⁷⁴ Jesus' intercession also enables believers to approach God.³⁷⁵ While "intercession" is mentioned only once in Hebrews, McKelvey helpfully points out that intercession "is implied in the numerous references to Christ's entering into the heavenly sanctuary (7:26; 8:2; 9:11–12; 9:24; 10:19–20) and in the repeated appeals to listeners to 'draw near' (4:16; 7:19, 25; 10:19, 22)."³⁷⁶ Jesus' intercession is likely conceived as a continuous activity that began with his exaltation and will continue until his parousia.³⁷⁷ These passages indicate Jesus' concern for humanity and his willingness to come to their aid. As high priest Jesus naturally fulfills liturgical functions. He is a minister (λειτουργός; 8:2) in the heavenly sanctuary and the mediator of a new and better covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24; cf. 7:22).

He Will Come Again

Finally, the author of Hebrews mentions Jesus' second coming. Jesus will return a second time to offer salvation without dealing with sin since he dealt with sin during his first coming (9:28). In the previous verse the author notes that it is appointed for human beings to die once and then

³⁷² Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 95.

³⁷³ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 144. Thompson also emphasizes the contrast: "The distinctive feature of Hebrews is the contrast between the Levitical priest, who is able to "deal gently" (*metriopathein*) with sinners, and Jesus, who is able to "sympathize" (*sympathein*) with the believers (4:15) because of his total solidarity with his people. Unlike the Levitical high priest, who "moderates the emotions" towards sinners, Jesus has total solidarity with the temptations that face the community" (*Hebrews*, 107). Mitchell sees the relationship between the two verbs as one of intimacy versus aloofness ("Rhetorical Propriety," 697).

³⁷⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 366.

³⁷⁵ Hay, *Glory*, 132; Kurianal, *Jesus*, 218.

³⁷⁶ McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 104.

³⁷⁷ Hay, *Glory*, 132.

comes judgment (9:27). Just as people die only once, so Jesus only died once for sin.³⁷⁸ But the author goes further to indicate that at the second coming, Jesus will not come to judge, but will come for salvation (εἰς σωτηρίαν). Long states it well:

[The author] seemed to be making the obvious point that, just as ordinary humans die only once, just so Jesus died only once, too. He did not have to repeat his sacrifice but died on the cross one time. But then the Preacher extends this truth in a surprising way. For those who hold on to his priestly ministry, Jesus has overthrown this pattern of death followed by judgment . . . What happened in Jesus' death was that the power of sin was defeated. He has borne the "sins of many"; he has taken into himself the judgment. Therefore he is coming back not to punish but to rescue his own.³⁷⁹

Some scholars see here the imagery of the Day of Atonement on which the people await expectedly for the high priest to reemerge from the holy of holies after making atonement for the people. The high priest's reemergence demonstrated to the people that the sacrifice had been accepted.³⁸⁰

In 10:37–38 the author quotes Hab 2:3–4 LXX (with Isa 26:20 LXX affixed to the front). In the original context the passage is part of God's second reply to Habakkuk's questioning. It refers to a vision that the prophet must write down since its fulfillment will not happen immediately but according to its appointed time; its realization will be coming soon.³⁸¹ The LXX translates the infinitive absolute, qal imperfect pair, **יָבֹא, יָבֹא**, as ἐρχόμενος ἔξει. The author of Hebrews, however, adds an article before ἐρχόμενος, making it a substantive. The expression ὁ ἐρχόμενος has messianic overtones.³⁸² Grässer points out that the future tense verb ἔξει is also used for the parousia of Christ (Matt 24:50; Luke 12:46; 13:35; Rom 11:26;

³⁷⁸ As Eisele expresses it: "So einmalig wie das Sterben eines jeden Menschen, so unwiederholbar ist das Opfer Christi" (*Unerschütterliches Reich*, 84).

³⁷⁹ Long, *Hebrews*, 100–101.

³⁸⁰ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:270; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 388–89; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 232–33; Lane, *Hebrews* 2:250–51; Craddock, "Hebrews," 113; Koester, *Hebrews*, 423; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 118; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 276; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 342; Allen, *Hebrews*, 488; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 110.

³⁸¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 167–72; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 110.

³⁸² Matt 3:11; 11:3; 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 7:19–20; 19:38; John 1:15, 27; 6:14; 11:27; 12:13; Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8. See Thomas, "Old Testament," 316; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 175; Michel, *Hebräer*, 364; Morris, "Hebrews," 111; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 199; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 302; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 135; William L. Lane, "Standing before the Moral Claim of God: Discipleship in Hebrews," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; MNTS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 211; Craddock, "Hebrews," 126; Gheorghita, *Septuagint*, 220–21; Mackie, *Eschatology*, 132.

2 Pet 3:10; Rev 2:25; 3:3) and the verb χρονίζω is chiefly reserved in the NT for the delay of the parousia (Matt 24:48; 25:5; Luke 12:45).³⁸³ It appears that the author has reinterpreted the passage to refer to Jesus.³⁸⁴ Hughes notes that the use of the present participle, rather than the future, gives an imminent sense to Jesus' coming.³⁸⁵ Some scholars see the introductory formula of 1:6 (ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην) as an allusion to Jesus' parousia, but as argued above, it is more likely a reference to his exaltation. These two references to the parousia likely suggest Jesus' trustworthiness and reliability; the author is convinced of the certainty of Jesus' return. His parousia also points to his beneficence since he will bring salvation to those who await his coming.

DEATH

Although one rarely has control over the circumstances of one's death, where possible, orators would use the manner of someone's death as a topic for praise (or blame). Aristotle remarks that the "courageous man . . . will be he who fearlessly confronts a noble death, or some sudden peril that threatens death . . . Also Courage is shown in dangers where a man can defend himself by valour or die nobly."³⁸⁶ Since we have already considered the events surrounding Jesus' death in the previous section, here we will briefly consider the manner of his death. That Jesus' death was an offering of himself (7:27; 9:14, 25, 28; 10:10) suggests that Jesus laid down his life voluntarily (10:7, 9). He exhibited selflessness by laying down his life on behalf of others (2:9, 14–15). He also evinced piety (5:7) and fortitude (12:2) in the face of suffering and death. His death accomplished

³⁸³ The only exception being Luke 1:21. See Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3:76.

³⁸⁴ This connection is explicitly made by Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 157; William Robinson, *The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Study in the Christian Doctrine of Hope* (Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK: Overdale College, 1950), 15–16; Médebielle, "Hébreux," 349; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:331; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 170; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 184; Sowers, *Hermeneutics of Philo*, 83; T. W. Lewis, "... And If He Shrinks Back' (Heb. X. 38b)," *NTS* 22 (1975): 90; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 435; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 302–3; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 273; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:128; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:304; Talbert, *Suffering*, 69; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 556; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 360; Koester, *Hebrews*, 467; McKnight, "Hebrews," 256; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 273; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 273; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 222; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 389–90; Allen, *Hebrews*, 532. Kosmala (*Hebräer*, 98) argues that ὁ ἐρχόμενος refers to God, but its common usage as a messianic title elsewhere speaks against this supposition.

³⁸⁵ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 435n37.

³⁸⁶ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 3.6.10, 12 (Rackham, LCL). See the discussion by deSilva, *Despising Shame*, 166–67.

noble purposes for others. His death broke the power of the devil (2:14), released humanity from fear and slavery (2:15), removed sin (7:27; 9:26, 28), and sanctified believers (13:12). Since Jesus was blameless (9:14), his self-sacrifice was efficacious for all time and only needed to be done once (9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14). Because of the joy that awaited him, Jesus was able to endure his death on a cross and the shame that was attached to it (12:2). Thus, Jesus' death was an example of a "noble death" because he selflessly laid down his own life for the benefit of others and because the beneficent effects of his death have a permanent legacy.

CHARACTER TRAITS

By way of conclusion, we will draw together the various aspects of the characterization of Jesus in summary fashion under the heading of character traits.

Divinity: Jesus is called "God" (θεός) in 1:8–9. Other titles such as "Lord" (1:10; 2:3; 7:14; 13:20) and "Son of God" (4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29) also imply divine status. Jesus shares the same divine nature or essence of God (1:3). Other traits indicate his divinity including his involvement in the creation and sustaining of the world (1:2–3, 10) and his eternity/immutability (1:8, 11–12; 5:6; 6:20; 7:3, 16–17, 24–25, 28; 13:8).

Humanity: Paradoxically, Jesus is also human. Jesus came into the world (2:9; 10:5), being made lower than the angels (2:9). He took on a human body (10:5, 10) with its flesh (2:14; 5:7; 10:20) and blood (2:14; 9:12, 14; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 20). He was made like other human beings experiencing temptation (2:18; 4:15), suffering (2:9–10, 18; 5:8; 9:26; 13:12), and death (2:9, 14; 5:7; 7:27; 9:12, 14, 25–26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14; cf. 13:20). He had a human lineage, being descended from the tribe of Judah (7:14).

Eternality/Immutability: Unlike the created order, Jesus does not change, nor will his years come to an end (1:11–12). He has an indestructible life (7:16) and he holds his throne (1:8) and priesthood forever (5:6; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21, 24–25, 28). He remains the same in the past, present, and future (13:8).

Power: Jesus' power is exemplified by his involvement in the creation and sustaining of the world (1:2–3, 10). All things are submitted to his dominion (2:8). He will defeat all his enemies (1:3; 10:13), including the devil (2:14).

Dignity/Glory/Honor/Exaltation: Jesus was deemed to have more glory and honor than Moses (3:3). The author uses an analogy to emphasize

Jesus' greater glory: Jesus has greater glory than Moses, just as a builder has greater glory than the house he built (3:3). Jesus was crowned with glory and honor after his death (2:9) and he is now exalted above the heavens (7:26). Jesus has entered into the heavenly realm (1:6) and sits at the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), where now he has received a name greater than the angels (1:4) and receives worship from them (1:6). The author possibly ascribes eternal glory to Jesus in the benediction (13:21).

Authority/Leadership: The designation "Lord" (1:10; 2:3; 7:14; 13:20) was a title used for rulers and landowners and signifies someone who has authority over others. Jesus is endowed with royal authority. The scepter was symbolic of royal power and authority (1:8). Several times we are told that Jesus takes his seat at the right hand of the throne of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Verses 1:5–13 appear to be a heavenly enthronement ceremony for Jesus. Jesus was also appointed high priest, giving him religious authority (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:5–6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 26; 8:1; 9:11; 10:21). He is also designated a minister in the heavenly sanctuary (8:2). Jesus held other offices suggesting leadership and authority: he is heir of all things (1:2), apostle (3:1), pioneer or author of salvation (2:10) and faith (12:2), forerunner (6:20), mediator of a new covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24), and the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20).

Pioneer/Initiator: In several places Jesus appears to be the pioneer, originator, or initiator of something. He is called the "firstborn" in 1:6. He is called the "pioneer" or "author" of salvation (2:10) and faith (12:2), and the "source" of salvation (5:9). He is the "forerunner" into the heavenly realm (6:20). He is the mediator of a *new* covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). He inaugurated a new and living way for believers (10:20). Jesus was also the originator of the message of salvation (2:3) and possibly the elementary teachings of the faith (6:1).

Trustworthiness/Reliability/Dependability: God saw it fit to appoint Jesus as heir of all things (1:2), anoint him as king (1:9), and appoint him as high priest (3:2; 5:1, 5–6, 10; 7:28), thus suggesting Jesus' reliability to handle these responsibilities. Moreover, God entrusted him with the care of humanity (2:13). He is a reliable messenger of God's salvation (2:3–4). Jesus is described as the "guarantee" of a better covenant (7:22). He gives a sure hope of salvation to believers (6:19–20). The author believes in the certainty of his parousia (9:28; 10:37–38).

Faithfulness: Jesus is described as a faithful high priest (2:17). The author presents a brief synkrisis between Jesus and Moses in 3:2–6. While Moses was faithful as a servant *in* (ἐν) his house, Jesus was faithful as a Son *over* (ἐπί) his house. Thus, Jesus' faithfulness even surpassed that of Israel's great lawgiver.

Mercy/Grace/Sympathy/Compassion: Jesus is described as a merciful high priest (2:17) who is able to sympathize with the weaknesses of humanity (4:15). He gives help to humanity (2:16, 18) and intercedes for them (7:25). By implication Jesus is better than other priests who can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided (5:2). He enables believers to draw near to God to find mercy and grace (4:16).

Beneficence/Caring/Selflessness/Self-Sacrifice: Jesus is designated as the high priest of the good things that have come (9:11), which include many salvific benefits. Jesus is continually portrayed as one who offers or sacrifices (7:27; 9:14, 25–26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14) himself for the benefit of humanity. He tasted death for everyone (2:9) and through his death rendered the devil powerless (2:14) and delivered humanity from the fear of death (2:15). The soteriological benefits that Jesus brings to humanity are described in a variety of ways. He saves (2:10; 5:9; 7:25; 9:28) and redeems (9:12, 15). He bears (9:28), cleanses (1:3), and atones for sins (2:17), and cleanses consciences (9:14; 10:22). He leads believers to glory (2:10) and gives them an eternal inheritance (9:15). He perfects (10:14) and sanctifies (2:11; 10:10, 29; 13:12) believers. The designation “great shepherd of the sheep” indicates Jesus’ care for his followers (13:20).

Piety/Devotion/Trust: Jesus exhibits his piety and devotion to God by turning to God in prayer (5:7). His prayers were heard because of his piety. He also proclaims God’s name and sings praises to him in the midst of the congregation (2:12). He also expresses his trust in God (2:13).

Obedience: Jesus expressed his willingness to do God’s will (10:7, 9). He learned further obedience through his suffering (5:8).

Righteousness/Holiness/Blamelessness/Innocence/Sinlessness: The author of Hebrews highlights Jesus’ moral excellence through a variety of terms. He loves righteousness and hates lawlessness (1:9), and uprightness characterizes his reign (1:8). Melchizedek, who was the “king of righteousness” (7:2), is likened to Jesus. Jesus was without sin (4:15) and therefore he did not have to offer a sacrifice on his own behalf (7:27), but could offer himself as a sacrifice without blemish (9:14), in contrast to other priests who were obligated to offer sacrifices for themselves first (5:3). In 7:26 Jesus is described as “holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners.”

Peace: Melchizedek, who was “king of peace” (7:2), is likened to Jesus. Hence, Jesus shares the same virtue.

Humility: Jesus demonstrated humility by being willing to be made lower than the angels (2:9), by taking on human flesh (2:14), and by showing his solidarity with humanity (2:11–13). Jesus also exhibited humility by not glorifying himself to become high priest (5:5). Jesus suffered humiliation by means of the crucifixion (12:2; 13:13).

Endurance/Perseverance: Jesus endured the pain and humiliation of the cross and the hostility of sinners against himself (12:2–3).

The portrait that emerges from an examination of the author's characterization of Jesus is that Jesus is a person of exemplary character. Jesus not only exhibits the highest of human virtues but he displays divine attributes as well. Jesus' exemplary character plays a prominent role in the author's argument and it has profound implications for the audience of Hebrews. These two dimensions will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS IN THE ARGUMENT OF HEBREWS

In the previous chapter, literary and rhetorical techniques were utilized in order to reconstruct the author's depiction of the character of Jesus in the book of Hebrews. In this chapter we will examine how the author's depiction of the character of Jesus is important for his argument. As noted in chapter two, the reconstruction of character is a cumulative process for the reader. Hence, in this chapter we will begin with a sequential reading of the book of Hebrews examining how the author's developing portrait of Jesus is important for the unfolding of his argument. The chapter will then draw out the implications for the argument of the book, noting particularly the benefits that Jesus' character brings to believers and the obligations that it requires from them.

THE ROLE OF THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS IN HEBREWS

Although Jesus does not feature prominently in large portions of Hebrews (3:7–4:13; 5:11–6:19; 10:19–11:40; 12:4–13:7), it is clear that the person and character of Jesus is one of the major foci of the book. Jesus is the main subject in the first two chapters and he is conspicuously present in the central argument (5:1–10; 7:1–10:18) of the book. Finally, Jesus appears in key places (13:8, 12–13) in the closing chapter of the book, including the benediction (13:20–21). The author states that his main point (κεφάλαιον) centers around Jesus, the Son (7:28), who is the exalted and enthroned high priest (8:1).

The author urges his audience to “consider” (κατανοήσατε; 3:1; ἀναλογίσασθε; 12:3) and to “look to” (ἀφορῶντες; 12:2) Jesus. The verb κατανοέω is an intensive form of νοέω meaning “to direct one’s whole mind to an object” or “from a higher standpoint to immerse oneself in it and hence to apprehend it in its whole compass.”¹ The verb can refer to either sensual or mental perception and may be translated as “observe

¹ Behm, “κατανοέω,” *TDNT* 4:973.

well, notice, understand, apprehend, perceive, consider, contemplate, ponder.”² Flew suggests that the verb “carries with it both the idea of continual gazing on the person and work of Jesus which is so vital for Christian devotion.”³ The verb ἀφοράω connotes the “looking away” from all other objects to concentrate on one thing; it means to “fix one’s eyes” upon something.⁴ It may also mean “to consider, reflect.”⁵ The verb ἀναλογίζομαι means “to calculate, consider, ponder.”⁶ Hence, in a few places during the discourse the author urges his audience to give their concentrated attention and reflection upon the character of Jesus. The author desires that his audience adopt his evaluative point of view about the character of Jesus since Jesus’ character will have profound implications for his audience.

1:1–4

The opening verses of Hebrews comprise the exordium (or part of the exordium) of the book. The purpose of the exordium is to gain the audience’s attention, make them favorably disposed towards the speech, and to introduce the main subject of his discourse. The author displays his rhetorical skill in the opening periodic sentence which encompasses the first four verses (1:1–4).⁷ The author employs a number of rare words and makes use of alliteration and chiasm and other rhetorical devices. The elevated language of the exordium correlates with the grandeur of his topic and serves to grab the audience’s attention.⁸

² Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 902; “κατανοέω,” *BAGD*, 415; Behm, “κατανοέω,” *TDNT* 4:974.

³ R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 80.

⁴ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 292; “ἀφοράω,” *BAGD*, 127; U. Kellermann, “ἀφορίζω,” *EDNT* 1:183; Spicq, “ἀφοράω,” *TLNT* 1:247.

⁵ Spicq, “ἀφοράω,” *TLNT* 1:248.

⁶ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 111; H. Balz and G. Schneider, “ἀναλογίζομαι,” *EDNT* 1:84.

⁷ Numerous studies have been done on the literary artistry of the exordium. See, for example, Robinson, “Literary Structure”; Meier, “Structure”; idem, “Symmetry”; Black, “Hebrews 1”; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:5–8; Ebert, “Chiastic Structure.”

⁸ The rhythmic prose of the exordium has prompted many scholars to surmise that the exordium contains a fragment of an early Christian hymn (particularly in verse 3): Günther Bornkamm, “Bekenntnis”; Luck, “Himmlisches und irdisches Geschehen,” 200; Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen*, 42; Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 137–40; Sanders, *NT Christological Hymns*, 19–20, 92–94; Wengst, *Christologische Formeln*, 166–70, 175–79; Hofius, *Christushymnus*, 75–102; Helyer, “*Prōtokos*,” 4–5; Hengel, “Hymns and Christology,” 84; Zimmerman, *Bekenntnis*, 52–60; Estella Ruth Boggs Horning, “Hymns,” 38–42; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 41–42; Tetley, “Priesthood,” 107; Langkammer, “Christuslieder,” 476; Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 275–82; idem, *Hebrews*, 99–103, 106–8. Its christological pattern (preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation), its distinctive vocabulary, its use of participial and relative

While Jesus is clearly the main character of the exordium, the first character we encounter is God (ὁ θεός). It is important for the author to introduce God first because for both the author and the audience God is the ultimate reliable authority. The author will utilize God's testimony about Jesus in the opening chapter. What God says about Jesus can be trusted absolutely. So, the author of Hebrews utilizes his strongest argument for establishing the character of Jesus at the very beginning of his discourse. This makes the audience more receptive for the author's argument in the remainder of the discourse.

The exordium focuses primarily on Jesus the Son of God. This becomes obvious when one observes that "Son" (υἱῷ) functions as the antecedent for the three relative clauses which follow in verses 2 and 3. The third relative pronoun in this series functions as the subject of the remaining participles (ὢν, φέρων, ποιησάμενος, γενόμενος) and verbs (ἐκάθισεν, κεκληρονόμηκεν) that follow in verses 3 and 4.

The author begins with a rather majestic portrait of Jesus. The exordium makes the following claims about Jesus: (1) God has spoken through Jesus; (2) Jesus was appointed heir of all things; (3) the world was created through Jesus; (4) Jesus is the reflection of God's glory, and the imprint of God's being; (5) Jesus sustains all things by his powerful word; (6) Jesus made purification for sins; and (7) Jesus has sat down at the right hand of God. The remainder of the discourse will elaborate upon this initial portrait.

In the opening synkrisis between Jesus and the prophets, the author compares four different aspects of God's revelation. First, the manner of revelation differs. The older revelation was given in many different portions and by different modes; by contrast God's complete revelation has now come in the singular revelation of Jesus. Second, the time of revelation differs. God spoke long ago in the past, but now speaks in the last days. There is a difference in the recipients of God's revelation. In the past

clauses, its use of parallelism, and its similarities with other NT texts deemed to be hymns (e.g., John 1:1–18; Phil 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:18–22) have led these scholars to conclude that Hebrews is making use of a hymn text. However, other scholars are not persuaded by this thesis; scholars have difficulty demarcating the actual boundaries of the hymn text, the style and themes addressed are consistent with the rest of the book, and some of the vocabulary is not found in other putative hymn texts. It is more likely that the passage is the author's own composition. Scholars who are skeptical that the exordium is using a hymnic fragment include, Robinson, "Literary Structure"; Frankowski, "Early Christian Hymns"; Meier, "Symmetry"; Black, "Hebrews 1," 186; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:62; Ebert, "Chiastic Structure," 176; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 97–98; Koester, *Hebrews*, 179; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 44–45; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 33.

the recipients of the divine revelation were the “fathers,” but now God speaks to the current generation. Finally, the agents of revelation differ. In the past God spoke through the prophets, but now he speaks through one who is Son. As Son, Jesus is the one most qualified to reveal God’s word to humanity.

The author of Hebrews never describes Jesus as a prophet.⁹ The purpose for contrasting Jesus with the prophets is not to indicate that Jesus is a better prophet, but to demonstrate that Jesus is a superior agent of revelation. Just as Jesus’ agency is superior to the prophets, so it will also be superior to the angels (2:2–3). Jesus’ status as Son also makes him superior to Moses (3:5–6) and to the Levitical priests (7:28). Moses was also an intermediary figure through whom God communicated his law (7:14; 8:5; 9:19; 10:28). Similarly, priests are intermediary figures who are appointed on behalf of humanity to offer sacrifices (5:1; 8:3; cf. 7:27; 9:6–7; 10:11; 13:11) and to receive tithes (7:5). Hence, Jesus’ status as Son makes him the perfect intermediary between God and humanity.

The one constancy between the old revelation and the new is that God is the one who speaks (ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας . . . ἐλάλησεν). While there is certainly a distinction between the old and the new revelation, the author does not disparage the older means of revelation; rather it is a comparison of good versus better.

While God spoke in various ways through the prophets, God now speaks his final and complete word in his Son Jesus.¹⁰ The speech of God will become an important theme throughout the book of Hebrews. Not only does God speak the words of Scripture throughout Hebrews (1:5–13; 4:3–4; 5:5–6; 6:14; 7:17, 21; 8:8–12; 12:5–6, 26; 13:5–6), but the author often reminds his audience of the importance of heeding God’s words (2:1–3; 4:1–2, 6–7, 6:5–6; 12:25–27; 13:7). The word of God has the capacity to probe deeply into the human spirit and to expose the inner person before God (4:12–13). The conclusion of the sermon exhorts the readers to heed the God who is speaking to them (12:25), thus forming a nice thematic inclusio for the whole discourse.

⁹ Witherington rightly comments, “Some see here the idea that Christ is presented as prophet, priest and king from the outset. The problematic part of that deduction here is the phrase *spoken in/through his Son*. The idea is probably not focusing on Christ’s own prophetic speech . . . but on Christ himself being the revelation on earth, the very speech of God, revealing what God had in mind” (*Hebrews*, 107–108). See also Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 134.

¹⁰ As W. Manson declares, “The finality of the Christian revelation is marked not by its temporal incidence alone, but by the transcendent character of the Person, the rank, the status, and the authority of Him through whom and in whom it comes” (*Hebrews*, 89).

While God has used words to communicate his message to humanity, now his word has become manifested in Jesus. Jesus is both the agent (the revealer) and content (the revealed) of God's message. As Michel declares, "Sein Kommen auf die Erde und seine Erhöhung, sein Wort und sein Weg sind Gottes Sprechen zu uns."¹¹ It is just as perilous to reject Jesus and his work as it is to ignore God's word (6:6; 10:29). In this respect, the author of Hebrews exhibits an affinity with the Johannine Logos Christology.¹²

The author of Hebrews proceeds to make a number of claims about Jesus which point to his divinity. First, he tells us that God made Jesus "heir of all things" (1:2; κληρονόμον πάντων). While the author does not use this designation for Jesus in the remainder of the book, he frequently does use inheritance language with respect to believers (1:14; 6:12, 15, 17; 9:15; 11:7–10, 16; 12:17).¹³ While the author does not make a direct connection between Jesus' heirship and the believer's heavenly inheritance, it is Jesus who secures the believer's eternal inheritance through his own death (9:15–17).

The author then says that Jesus was God's agent in the creation of the world (1:2). In the following verse he indicates that Jesus also governs the world by his powerful word (1:3). These statements adumbrate 1:10–12 in which the author appropriates Ps 101:26–28 LXX to highlight Jesus' role in the creation and governance of the world. Verse 2 finds correlation with verse 10 which indicates that Jesus created the earth and the heavens, while verse 3 finds correlation with verse 12 which indicates Jesus' ability to manage the created order. While these passages point to Jesus' creative activity, the real emphasis appears to be on Jesus' power, which will have important implications for Jesus' followers. As Lane notes, the "presentation of Jesus as the one who sustains everything by his powerful word demonstrated that he was able to sustain the people of God in periods marked by stress."¹⁴

¹¹ Michel, *Hebräer*, 95.

¹² Many scholars see a Logos-type Christology; see, e.g., MacNeill, *Christology*, 60; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 96–97; Williamson, *Philo*, 410; idem, "Incarnation"; Nash, "Notion of Mediator," 95; Barrett, "Christology," 199; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 15–16.

¹³ In this respect Hebrews is in line with other NT writings which also use inheritance language in figurative ways with reference to believers. Believers are said to be heirs (Gal 3:29; 4:7; Titus 3:7) and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). Believers may inherit the kingdom of God (Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Jas 2:5) or eternal life (Matt 19:29; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18). See also Eph 1:11, 14, 18; 3:6; Col 1:12; 3:24; 1 Pet 1:4; 3:7, 9; Rev 21:7 for additional inheritance language.

¹⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:18.

The author further claims that Jesus is the “reflection of God’s glory.” This assertion anticipates future statements about Jesus’ glory (2:9; 3:3; 13:21). Since Jesus is now “crowned with glory and honor” (2:9), he is able to assist God in bringing his followers to glory (2:10). The author reinforces his claim about Jesus’ divinity by stating that Jesus is the “exact imprint of God’s being.” The language of verses 2 and 3 echoes wisdom traditions which claim that wisdom existed with God before the creation of the world. Hence, the force of these statements underscores Jesus’ divinity which includes his preexistence, glory, power, and wisdom. Jesus’ divinity will become the focus for the remainder of chapter 1.

The author will fully elaborate upon his next two statements in the remainder of the discourse. The author claims that Jesus “made purification for sins” and he “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3). With these two statements the author succinctly alludes to both Jesus’ priestly and royal roles.¹⁵ Jesus’ primary role as high priest was to offer himself up as a sacrifice for sins (7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:12). The old covenant had a system for dealing with the sins of people (5:1–3; 7:27; 9:7; 10:11; 13:11), but it proved to be ineffectual since it could neither atone for sins nor ease the conscience of the worshiper (9:9; 10:1–4, 11). Under the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus, on the other hand, there is atonement (2:17) and forgiveness (10:17–18) for sins, and for the cleansing of the conscience (9:14; 10:22). Jesus’ royalty will be emphasized in chapter 1 in the catena of quotations that follows (1:5–13), but also throughout the discourse the author refers to Jesus’ exaltation to the right hand of the throne of God (8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

The shift from the present tense (ὧν, φέρων) to the aorist tense (ποιησάμενος, ἐκάθισεν) in verse 3 hints at a shift in temporal perspective. The present participles denote continuous, ongoing action or condition,¹⁶ and thus intimates Jesus’ “eternal, timeless existence.”¹⁷ The shift to the aorist tense, on the other hand, indicates that these are completed actions that took place at a distinct moment in time. Jesus’ self-sacrifice for the purification of sins has been accomplished once for all (7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10), and now he takes his permanent place in the presence of God (9:24).

¹⁵ See also 10:12 and 12:2 where both roles are again combined.

¹⁶ Lenski, *Hebrews*, 36.

¹⁷ M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), 49; cf. Westcott, *Hebrews*, 9; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 36. Ellingworth’s remark that the shift in temporal perspective is indicated more by the “content of v. 3 as a whole” should be noted, but at the same time, the change in tense is surely not accidental (*Hebrews*, 98).

Verse 4 is transitional and introduces the author's synkrisis between Jesus and the angels. Jesus becomes (γενόμενος) greater than the angels in that he has inherited a greater name (ὄνομα). Wickham helpfully points out the distinction between ὢν of verse 3 and γενόμενος in this verse; the former suggests Jesus' "essential, changeless being," while the latter indicates "existence that changes and develops."¹⁸ The author does not specify what this name is. Some scholars have taken the name to be "Jesus,"¹⁹ "Lord,"²⁰ or "High Priest,"²¹ but the majority of scholars takes it to be "Son."²² This latter option accords well with the following verse in which God addresses Jesus as his Son. Ellingworth, however, protests that the "difficulty about accepting this as a complete explanation is that elsewhere in Hebrews, sonship is spoken of as a permanent attribute of Christ, not as a title which is given or acquired at the time of his exaltation" (see 1:2; 5:8).²³ Dey claims that it is not one name that is in view, but a series of honorific titles: Son, Firstborn, God, Lord.²⁴ But this claim ignores the fact that ὄνομα is singular in verse 4. "Name" could simply signify that Jesus receives a greater reputation.²⁵ G. Guthrie points out that "name" could have a broad range of meanings, including "status," "title," "rank," "reputation," or "person."²⁶ He opines that what Jesus receives is

¹⁸ Wickham, *Hebrews*, 3.

¹⁹ Andreasen, *Hebrews*, 63.

²⁰ E.g., Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, "Διαφορώτερον ὄνομα in Hebr. 1,4: Christus als Träger des Gottesnamens," *ST* 38 (1984): 65–75; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 73. Bauckham takes it to be the divine name, יהוה ("Divinity," 21–22).

²¹ Hugedé (*Sacerdoce*, 22–24) argues that the author delays revealing the name until the end of chapter 2 (verse 17). Cf. Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (trans. J. B. Orchard; rev. ed., Leominster, Herefordshire, Great Britain: Gracewing, 2009), 85–86.

²² E.g. McLean, *Hebrews*, 26; Stuart, *Hebrews*, 272; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:59; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 40; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xli; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 39; Harris, "Translation," 132–33; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 47; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:75; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:17; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 216, 219; Craddock, "Hebrews," 24; Schenck, "Keeping," 93; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 92; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (EBS; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 46; Allen, *Hebrews*, 131; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 98.

²³ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 105. Some scholars note the tension in Hebrews between what belonged to Jesus in his preexistent state and what he receives upon his exaltation: Koester, for example, says that "Some statements imply eternal sonship while others suggest that a change occurred with Jesus' death and exaltation, and Hebrews does not reconcile these tensions" (*Hebrews*, 186); see also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 47; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 73.

²⁴ Dey, *Intermediary World*, 147–49, 153.

²⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 182. Morris raises the possibility that "name" refers to his whole character and personality ("Hebrews," 16); see also Tetley, "Priesthood," 118. MacNeill argues that it refers to his dignity, glory, or fame (*Christology*, 37).

²⁶ G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 50. Similarly, Rissi states, "Da die Zitate nicht bloss einen Namen nennen, sondern gleich drei: Sohn, Gott und Herr (1,5.9.10), ist ὄνομα hier . . . nicht 'Name', sondern 'Amt, Stellung'" (*Theologie*, 52).

“a designation or rank formerly reserved for God.”²⁷ Spicq makes the intriguing suggestion that the name Jesus receives is the ineffable divine name, which no human ear can hear, nor mind conceive.²⁸

The exordium exhibits a pattern of preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation in the life of Jesus. The exordium emphasizes Jesus’ divinity and highlights his significant roles in the creation of the world and the redemption of humanity. The exordium is important because it gives the initial portrait of Jesus which is designed to impress the audience, but this initial portrait also hints at many of the themes that will be addressed in the remainder of the discourse.

1:5–14

The author proceeds with a catena of seven Scripture quotations. Since the catena is offered with very little commentary, some scholars have surmised that the author was using a preexisting testimonia or florilegium such as is found among the Qumran scrolls.²⁹ While the use of such traditional materials cannot be entirely ruled out, it is more likely that the catena is the author’s own construction. The use of literary devices such as inclusio, chiasm, and antithesis points to a passage that has been carefully constructed by the author.

The catena functions as a synkrisis to demonstrate how Jesus is superior to the angels. The quotations are all placed into the mouth of God. This literary device of prosopopoeia/ethopoeia serves as divine testimony. God, whose witness is most reliable, is now speaking on behalf of his Son. The characterization of Jesus in these verses is extremely trustworthy since it is based on the testimony of God.

²⁷ G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 50.

²⁸ Spicq says, “Il s’agit donc d’un nom divin ineffable, qu’aucune oreille humaine ne peut personne aucun esprit parfaitement concevoir” (*Hébreux*, 1:12).

²⁹ E.g., *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174) and *4QTestimonia* (4Q175). James Rendall Harris was the first to argue for the use of testimonia in Hebrews (“Testimonies,” 43–50) and he has been followed to some degree by other scholars: Syngé, *Scriptures*, 3–6, 53–54; Spicq, “Apollon,” 384; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 43–44; Hay, *Glory*, 38–39; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 50–51. This thesis has been largely called into question: Leonard, *Authorship*, 352–53; Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 26–27; Kistemaker, *Psalms Citations*, 92; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 43–45; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 109–110; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 65–66n130. Similarities between Heb 1:5–14 and 1 Clem 36:1–6 have prompted some scholars to surmise a common liturgical tradition behind both writings; see Käsemann, *Wandering*, 170–72, Theissen, *Untersuchungen*, 34–37; Michel, *Hebräer*, 29. It is more likely, however, that 1 Clement is dependent on Hebrews; see Gareth Lee Cockerill, “High Priest Title,” 437–40; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:26.

The Sonship of Jesus is declared in verse 5 by two quotations which are linked by καὶ πάλιν. The two quotations, as juxtaposed to one another, form a nice chiasm:

- A You are my Son
 B Today I have begotten you
 B I will be his Father
 A And he will be my Son

The rhetorical question, which governs both quotations, anticipates a negative answer: no single angel has ever been addressed by God as “Son.” The two quotations together underscore the unique and intimate relationship that Jesus has with God. The title of “Son” also has royal connotations for the author of Hebrews. As already noted in the previous chapter, the first quotation is taken from Ps 2 which is a royal enthronement hymn, while the second comes from 2 Sam 7 (or 1 Chr 17), in which God establishes a covenant with David promising that his descendents will occupy the throne of Israel forever.

The second quotation, taken from 2 Sam 7:14 (or 1 Chr 17:13) emphasizes the reciprocal father-son relationship between Jesus and God. Again, this unique relationship is not characteristic of the relationship between God and the angels. The author of Hebrews does, however, describe Christian believers as “sons” (υἱοί; 2:10; 12:5–8) and “children” (παἰδία; 2:13–14). As we will see, this relationship comes by virtue of the fact that Jesus identifies believers as “brothers” (2:11–12), and since Jesus is God’s Son, then by inference believers are also God’s children. Later, the author of Hebrews says that God relates to Christian believers as “sons,” even to the point of disciplining them (12:5–11). Christian believers should, in turn, respect God as their father (12:9).

The next two quotations in verses 6 and 7 deal with the angels and serve as a contrast to Jesus. The first of these two quotations is introduced with the clause, “when he brings the firstborn into the world.” As argued in the previous chapter, this most likely refers to Jesus’ exaltation/enthronement in the heavenly world. The designation “firstborn” indicates Jesus’ preeminence and favored status with God, and it also appears to have royal connotations for the author. Later, members of the heavenly Jerusalem are designated as the church or assembly of the firstborn (ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων; 12:23). As Bruce remarks, “All the people of Christ are the ‘firstborn’ children of God, through their union with him who is the Firstborn *par excellence*.”³⁰

³⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 359.

The quotation that follows, taken from Deut 32:43 LXX or Ps 96:7 LXX, emphasizes the fact that angels are commanded to worship Jesus. The quotation serves to underscore the divinity of Jesus, for only God is worthy to receive worship.

The fourth quotation in verse 7, taken from Ps 103:4 LXX, is clearly set in antithesis to the quotation in verses 8–9 (as well as the quotation in verses 10–12), as indicated by the μέν . . . δέ construction.³¹ The quotation suggests that the angels have servant roles in contrast to the Son who is the sovereign king. The servant status of the angels is reemphasized in verse 14. In addition, the ephemeral nature of wind and fire hints at the transitory nature of the angels, in contrast to the eternal nature of the Son (1:11–12). Finally, the author may be hinting at the creaturely nature (ποιῶν) of the angels versus the Son who is begotten.

The fourth and fifth quotations are both addressed to the Son. The first of these quotations (1:8–9), taken from Ps 44:7–8 LXX, addresses Jesus as “God” (ὁ θεός), thus highlighting his divinity. Jesus’ kingship, as indicated by metonymy (throne, scepter), is marked by eternality (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος) and righteousness (εὐθύτης; δικαιοσύνης). Righteousness will become an important theme in Hebrews. The mature Christian is one who is acquainted with righteousness (5:13). It is the righteous person who endures through difficult times (10:38). Abel (11:4) and Noah (11:7), as well as numerous other saints (11:33), were examples of those who exhibited righteousness through their actions. Those who are trained by discipline (παιδεία) will exhibit righteousness (12:11). Finally, it is the righteous who will inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22–23).

The sixth quotation (1:10–12), taken from Ps 101:26–28 LXX, is meant to be taken closely together with the previous one as evidenced by the connective καί. The two quotations together demonstrate the superiority of Jesus to the angels, not only in terms of his nature and status, but also in terms of his deeds. The quotation from Ps 101 LXX addresses Jesus as

³¹ Most scholars translate the πρὸς in verse 7 as “with regard to, with reference to, in respect to, about, concerning” (e.g., Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 19; Meier, “Symmetry,” 511; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 57; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 25; Bateman, *Hermeneutics*, 225; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 48). However, a minority translates the preposition as “to” (Koester, *Hebrews*, 193; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 333), despite the fact that the angels are talked about in the third person. The distinction is not significant since God is still depicted as speaking. The preposition πρὸς most likely means “to” in verses 8 and 13 (although scholars are divided about this). The designation ὁ θεός in verse 8 most likely functions as a vocative, while verse 13 contains the second person imperative κάθου, and the personal pronoun σου; both instances must be construed as direct addresses of God to the Son.

“Lord” (κύριε), a designation that underscores his authority and divinity.³² The quotation also demonstrates his role in the creation of the earth and heavens. Lane points out that “Jewish theology assigned a prominent role to the angels as those who were present at the moment of the creation and who assisted God in the government of the universe. The writer affirms it is the Son alone through whom God created the universe; it is the Son, not the angels, who upholds it through his sovereign word.”³³

Jesus’ eternity and immutability are also highlighted by contrasting Jesus to the created order which is likened to garments that can wear out or be changed (1:10–12).³⁴ DeSilva highlights the significance of these verses for the author’s purpose:

These verses introduce axiological claims (assessment of value) that will be crucial to the success of the author’s strategy. All material creation is of limited value since it is of limited duration. The addressees will therefore be urged to invest only in the eternal possessions (10:34; 11:13–16; 12:26–28; 13:13–14) and to consider worldly goods and security ultimately to be a bad and foolish investment (11:24–26; 12:16–17).³⁵

Later, the author would affirm that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (13:8). The author affirms Jesus’ constancy and hence his reliability and trustworthiness. It is this trust in Jesus that will form the foundation for much of the author’s exhortations later in the discourse.

The seventh and final quotation (1:13), taken from Ps 109:1 LXX, indicates Jesus’ kingship as well as his ultimate victory over all his enemies. This quotation is introduced with a rhetorical question similar to the one found in verse 5, thus forming a nice *inclusio*. The question anticipates a negative answer: no angel has ever had the honor of sitting at God’s right hand or triumphing over enemies. The quotation foreshadows references to Jesus’ defeat of the devil (2:14–15) and all sinful adversaries (10:27), and having all things subjected to him (2:8). The affirmation that Jesus will defeat his enemies will have importance for the author’s argument. The audience has also received opposition to their faith (10:32–34), as did their ancestors in the faith (11:35–38). Jesus himself experienced hostility from sinners (12:3) but was victorious over them (12:2). The author will thus

³² “Lord” is not found in the MT but is in the LXX from which the author drew his quotation.

³³ Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:30.

³⁴ Later, the author will hint at the fact that the heavens and the earth can be “removed” (12:26–27).

³⁵ DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 100.

urge his audience to endure in their faith (10:35–39; 12:1–3) and even to bear Jesus’ reproach (13:13).

Ps 109 LXX will be one of the most important passages for the author’s overall argument in the discourse. Not only does the quotation from verse 1 of the psalm hearken back to the exordium in 1:3, but it also anticipates later references to Jesus’ sitting at the right hand of God (8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Verse 4 of the same psalm will be used to undergird the author’s contention that Jesus is a priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6; 7:17, 21).

The author concludes the catena with a final rhetorical question which expects an affirmative answer (οὐχί) about the role of angels (1:14). Angels are merely servants of God who are sent out (ἀποστελλόμενα) at his bidding, and not on their own initiative. The present participle suggests that the angels are continually being sent out in service.³⁶

The catena of Scripture quotations has a cumulative effect. The four titles ascribed to Jesus, Son (1:5), firstborn (1:6), God (1:8–9), and Lord (1:10), highlight his divinity and authority. Jesus’ divinity is also indicated by his creation of the earth and heavens (1:10), by his eternality and immutability (1:8, 11–12), and by his receiving worship from the angels (1:6). In contrast to Jesus, the angels are never addressed as “Sons” by God (1:5), thus highlighting Jesus’ unique relationship with God. Jesus’ royal status is indicated by the application of OT kingship passages to Jesus (1:5, 8–9, 13). The title “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον) is likely an allusion to Ps 88:28 LXX, another kingship psalm (1:6). Jesus’ reign is characterized by righteousness (1:8) and victory over enemies (1:13). The subordinate status of the angels is indicated by their worship of Jesus (1:6) and their servant roles (1:7, 14). Verse 1:7 may also imply that the angels are created beings (ποιῶν) who are ephemeral and changeable in nature (like wind and flame).

What then is the function of this synkrisis between Jesus and the angels? In the most immediate context, the contrast will undergird the exhortation that immediately follows in 2:1–4. Jesus is a superior agent of revelation than the angels, and hence his message needs to be heeded. In the larger context of Hebrews, however, the synkrisis serves to introduce many issues and themes that will be addressed at greater length in the remainder of the discourse.

³⁶ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 50.

2:7–4

The author inserts the first of his warning passages that will be characteristic of the book. The admonition arises naturally out of the foregoing exposition on Jesus' character. Since Jesus is superior to the angels in numerous ways, then the revelation given by God through him is superior to the revelation given by God through the angels. By the time of the NT, a tradition had emerged that the law which was given on Sinai was not given directly by God, but was given through the mediation of angels. This tradition is reflected elsewhere in the NT (Acts 7:38, 53; Gal 3:19).³⁷ The author uses an *a fortiori* or lesser-to-greater (*a minore ad maius*) argument.³⁸ If the revelation of God, which was mediated by angels, was valid (βέβαιος) and the violation of the law had dire consequences, how much more severe will be the consequences of disregarding the revelation of God mediated by his Son (2:2)?

The synkrisis between Jesus and the angels is also present in this section. This becomes apparent by juxtaposing the various phrases of verses 2 and 3 side by side:

Verse 2	Verse 3
ὁ . . . λαληθεὶς λόγος	σωτηρίας . . . λαλεῖσθαι
δι' ἀγγέλων	διὰ τοῦ κυρίου
ἐγένετο βέβαιος	ἐβεβαιώθη

The passive verbals (λαληθεὶς; λαλεῖσθαι) should be construed as divine passives. They point back to the exordium (λαλήσας; ἐλάλησεν) which contrasted Jesus with the prophets. In both cases Jesus is the superior agent of God's revelation. Jesus is called "Lord" here, indicating his greater authority to convey the divine message.³⁹ The author declares that the message of salvation began to be spoken (ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι) through Jesus (2:3). But we should understand this message to be more than just the spoken words of Jesus. O'Brien conveys it well: "Jesus' proclamation

³⁷ The tradition may have emerged from such passages as Deut 33:2 LXX and Ps 67:18 LXX. This tradition also seems to be reflected in *Jub.* 1:27, 29; 2:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 15:136.

³⁸ The rabbis described this argument as קל והומר (*qal wahomer*), meaning, "light and heavy."

³⁹ Some scholars like to describe it as a contrast between "law" and "gospel" (e.g., Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 62; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 45; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 68).

of the kingdom of God is naturally in view. But since he also embodies and accomplishes the salvation which he announces, it is best to understand this 'speaking through the Lord' in a comprehensive sense so as to include Jesus' proclamation, sacrificial death, and exaltation as marking the beginning of salvation."⁴⁰ Jesus' revelation was then confirmed (ἐβεβαιώθη) by those who heard him (2:3) and by the divine testimony (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος)⁴¹ of miraculous signs and wonders (2:4). Jesus is portrayed as a reliable messenger of God's word of salvation.

The author warns against drifting away (παραρῶμεν) from the faith and neglecting or disregarding (ἀμελήσαντες) God's message of salvation (2:1, 3). The rhetorical question expects a negative answer: there will be no escape for those who disregard God's message of salvation. The punishment that is in view is probably the eschatological judgment that awaits unbelievers (6:8; 10:26–31; 12:25).

2:5–18

After the brief paraenesis of 2:1–4 the author resumes with an additional synkrisis between Jesus and the angels. The tone of this section is decidedly different, however. While in chapter 1 the author demonstrated that Jesus is superior to the angels by virtue of his divinity, in chapter 2 he will show how Jesus is superior to the angels by virtue of his humanity.

The author begins this section with a quotation from Ps 8:5–7 LXX followed by a brief exposition of the passage (2:5–9). The major interpretive question in this passage is: does the author interpret the psalm christologically as referring to Jesus, or does he construe it as referring to human beings but then applies it to Jesus as the representative head of humanity? When he begins to explicate the quotation in verse 8, to whom does the pronoun αὐτῷ refer? Does the αὐτῷ refer to Jesus or to humanity? The fact that αὐτῷ is singular is indecisive for settling the question since it could refer back to ἄνθρωπος (v. 6), which is a singular noun used in a collective sense. If the author intends to read the psalm anthropologically, then the statement in verse 8, "we do not yet see everything in subjection," means that, despite the fact that God has given humanity dominion over

⁴⁰ O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 88; see also Erich Grässer, "Das Heil als Wort: Exegetische Erwägungen zu Hebr 2,1–4," in *Aufbruch und Verheissung: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Hebräerbrieff zum 65. Geburtstag mit einer Bibliographie des Verfassers* (eds. Martin Evang and Otto Merk; BZNW 65; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 133–34; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:39; Allen, *Hebrews*, 195.

⁴¹ Ellingworth says that "Here both prefixes are to be given their due weight: the witness of events accompanies (συν-) and adds to (-επι-) the witness of words" (*Hebrews*, 141).

the created order, in actuality we do yet see all things in subjection to humanity.⁴² Verse 9, then, by this reading, contrasts Jesus with the rest of humanity; Jesus (by implication) *does* have all things subjected to him. Delitzsch is representative of this view when he states that the meaning of the psalm is “that God has destined man to be lord over all things, that this destination has not yet been realized in mankind in general, but that the Son of man has, in the person of Jesus, been already exalted to such universal dominion.”⁴³ If the author intends to read the psalm christologically, then the statement in verse 8 indicates that all things are *not yet* subjected to Jesus, but will be in the future.⁴⁴ Verse 9 would then be contrasting what has *already* been completed in Jesus’ life (humiliation and exaltation) versus what has *not yet* been completed (dominion over all things). Thompson is one representative of this view who states that the “author interprets the psalm as the celebration, not of the place of humankind over creation, but of the place of the Son over ‘the coming world.’”⁴⁵

⁴² Scholars who read Ps 8 anthropologically in this context include: Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 72–73; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 96–97; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:105; Lowrie, *Hebrews*, 46; Moll, *Hebrews*, 49; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 32; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 42; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 23; Selph, “Christology,” 43; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 98–99; Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 102–3; Johnson, *Humanity*, 114; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 57; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 75; Brevard S. Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon,” *Int* 23 (1969): 25; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 247; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 73–74; Morris, “Hebrews,” 24–25; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 66; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 49; Hegemann, *Hebräer*, 67; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 75n35; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:109, 115; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 220; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 106; Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997); Asumang, *Unlocking*, 91; Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implication for English Translations,” in *Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham et al.; LNTS 387; London: T & T Clark, 2008); O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 96–97; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 83, 89–93; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 25.

⁴³ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:108.

⁴⁴ Scholars who read Ps 8 christologically in this context include: McLean, *Hebrews*, 58; Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:94–95; Guers, *Hébreux*, 59–60; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 86–88; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 34; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 207–9; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 125–26; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 67; Michel, *Hebräer*, 138–39; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 27; idem, *Challenge*, 77–79; Pauline Giles, “The Son of Man in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *ExpTim* 86 (1975): 328–32; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 84, 87; Peterson, *Perfection*, 52; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 86; Braun, *Hebräer*, 52, 56; Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 25–26; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 72; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:116–17; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 195; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 151–52; Long, *Hebrews*, 35–37; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 96, 99–100; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 56; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 141; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 60; Barry C. Joslin, “‘Son of Man’ or ‘Human Being’?: Hebrews 2:5–9 and a Response to Craig Blomberg,” *JBW* 14 (Fall 2009): 43–45; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 129–30.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Hebrews*, 60.

On the one hand, it appears that the psalm was not considered messianic by the ancient Jews.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the psalm is applied to Christ elsewhere in the NT, and is often linked with an allusion to Ps 109:1 LXX (see 1:13).⁴⁷ On the one hand, the expression “son of man” (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) evokes Jesus’ self-designation throughout the gospels.⁴⁸ It may have been this expression that prompted the author to view the psalm christologically. On the other hand, the title “Son of Man” almost always appears with the definite articles (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) in the gospels,⁴⁹ so that it is unlikely that the author views it as a christological title.⁵⁰ The author does not use the phrase to refer to Jesus anywhere else in the discourse. Moreover, if construed christologically, it would break the parallelism of the psalm.⁵¹ On the one hand, up to this point the author has made no reference to humanity in general. The author has primarily been focusing on the characterization of Jesus. On the other hand, the following section discusses Jesus’ solidarity with humanity and it is reasonable to assume that this conception originated in the author’s interpretation of Ps 8.⁵²

Deciding between the two alternatives is extremely difficult and this accounts for the reason why scholars are decidedly split over which interpretation is in view. Some scholars remain noncommittal, declaring that the difference between the two interpretations is of little consequence.⁵³ Increasingly, scholars are seeing an intentional ambiguity on the part of the author. Koester, for example, remarks that a “tension in the psalm

⁴⁶ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:104; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 42; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 84; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 84; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 150; Koester, *Hebrews*, 215.

⁴⁷ 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22; Phil 3:21; 1 Pet 3:22; cf. also Matt 21:16 where Jesus appears to apply the psalm to himself.

⁴⁸ Matt 8:2; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64; Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62; Luke 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44, 56, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7; John 1:51; 3:13, 14; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31. It is found only once on the lips of another person: Stephen, in Acts 7:56.

⁴⁹ The one exception being John 5:27. In Rev 1:13 and 14:14 the expression appears without an article, but it seems to be an allusion to Dan 7:13.

⁵⁰ So, Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:47; Koester, *Hebrews*, 215–16; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 65; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 40; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 90; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 95.

⁵¹ As Wilson points out (*Hebrews*, 49).

⁵² See Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 150–51) for a full listing of the arguments for each side.

⁵³ Gordon opines that the “arguments are finely balanced and the difference ultimately insubstantial, since, whichever way we take it, the author plainly regards Christ as fulfilling the terms of Psalm 8” (*Hebrews*, 67). See also Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews*, 41.

enables it to bear two different lines of interpretation, both of which will be utilized by the author.”⁵⁴

In line with this last view, it is likely that the author wanted to promote a “double reading” of the psalm.⁵⁵ The author introduces the quotation with the statement that God did not subject the coming world to angels (2:5). Notice that the author does not positively identify to whom the coming world is subjected. The author then proceeds with the quotation from Ps 8. An audience familiar with the psalm would naturally expect that the psalm deals with humanity’s status and role within the created order. This expectation is not overturned in verse 8; the audience would naturally construe the pronoun αὐτῷ to refer to humanity in general. However, verse 9 would cause the audience to do a “double take.” They are now forced to reconsider the psalm in light of Jesus.

The reinterpretation of the psalm involves a number of hermeneutical moves. First, the parallelism of Ps 8:6 LXX is no longer considered synonymously but antithetically. The being “made . . . lower than the angels” and the crowning “with glory and honor” are no longer descriptions of the elevated status of humanity within the created order, but the descriptions of Jesus’ humiliation and glorification respectively. Second, the “subjecting all things” no longer describes humanity’s role of dominion over the created order, but Jesus’ sovereign rule over all things.⁵⁶ In the original context of the psalm, the word “all” (πάντα) was qualified by reference to the animals, but now in the context of Hebrews it takes on a wider meaning. Third, there is likely a reinterpretation of the phrase βραχύ τι, which translates the Hebrew adverb *ʕḇḇ*. Both the Hebrew and the Greek can express either degree (“a little lower, a little less”) or time (“a little while”). In the original context of the psalm (both the MT and the LXX) it most likely indicates degree; humanity is made “a little lower” than the

⁵⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 221. Allen opines that αὐτῷ refers both to humanity and Christ; in context it refers to humanity, but “Jesus as the Son of Man is the head of the human race and thus cannot be excluded from its scope” (*Hebrews*, 208). See also Thomas, “Old Testament,” 306; Schenck, *Cosmology*, 55–59; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 90; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 20; Moffitt, “Way,” 159.

⁵⁵ So, deSilva, *Perseverance*, 110.

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that the first line of Ps 8:7 LXX (“You have given them dominion over the works of your hand”) is missing in some ancient manuscripts of Hebrews. The line may have been added by later copyists to make the text of Hebrews conform to the psalm. If the shorter reading is original, the author may have omitted it because it did not suit his purposes, or it may have been missing from the author’s *Vorlage*. Alternatively, but less likely, the line may have been accidentally omitted by copyists in the transmission of the text of Hebrews. The external evidence is indecisive for determining the better reading.

angels (or God). In the context of Hebrews, however, it most likely has a temporal meaning. Jesus was made lower than the angels only for “a little while.”⁵⁷ The author emphasizes the temporary humiliation of Jesus in verse 9 by rearranging the components of the verse, placing βραχύ τι prominently in front.

Verse 9 also exhibits artful construction in other ways. As Attridge points out, the two phrases from Ps 8:6 LXX are used to frame the name Jesus.⁵⁸ The pivotal event, “the suffering of death,” is also placed in the middle between the two participial clauses.⁵⁹ This can be demonstrated visually:

τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον
 βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου
 δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον

The verse thus gives a nice synopsis of the career of Jesus: humiliation, passion, and exaltation. Verse 9 concludes with a ὅπως clause stating the

⁵⁷ The overwhelming majority of commentators take βραχύ τι as temporal in the context of Hebrews. Michaels, however, goes against the majority in interpreting it as an adverb of degree. Commenting on verse 7, he states, “In Hebrews, it is tempting to adopt the temporal meaning, ‘for a little while,’ because of 2:9, where Jesus is only temporarily ‘lower than the angels.’ But the rendering, ‘only a little’ is more in keeping with the biblical psalm, where the purpose of the phrase was to exalt humans, not accent their inferiority to angels. Even in 2:9, where Jesus is in view, the accent is on his full identification with those who are ‘a little lower than the angels,’ not on how long that identification might have lasted” (“Hebrews,” 345; cf. Stuart, *Hebrews*, 291 for a similar interpretation). Michaels wants to say that the author of Hebrews “sees things the same way” as the psalmist (348), but as demonstrated the author has actually created a new interpretation of the psalm, which the psalmist did not foresee.

⁵⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 72–73.

⁵⁹ While the general thrust of the verse is clear, the relationship of the various clauses to one another is unclear. First, does διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου modify ἡλαττωμένον or ἐστεφανωμένον? If it modifies the former, then it expresses the purpose for Jesus’ humiliation: he came to die. This idea is expressed more explicitly at 2:14. If it modifies the latter, then it indicates the cause or reason for Jesus’ crowning: Jesus was crowned because of his death. Here one can find a parallel with Phil 2:9. Either meaning is perfectly acceptable since διὰ with the accusative can express cause or purpose (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 389). As the sentence is constructed, it appears to go more naturally with what follows since it stands in closer proximity to the latter clause. Johnson prefers the first option (*Hebrews*, 91–92). The majority of commentators adopt the latter interpretation (e.g., Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:96; Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 80; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 99; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 89; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:111; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 17–18; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 45; Milligan, *Theology*, 98–99; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 24; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 74; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 90; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 86; Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 29; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 52; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 76; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:49; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 155). Since it stands between the two participial clauses, it is also possible that it does “double duty.” Lowrie prefers this option (*Hebrews*, 50).

purpose for Jesus' mission: Jesus tasted death on behalf of all people.⁶⁰ This verse also contains a notoriously difficult text-critical problem; the majority of ancient manuscripts contain the reading χάριτι θεοῦ, but some ancient manuscripts and early church fathers have the more difficult reading χωρὶς θεοῦ.⁶¹ Fortunately, a resolution of this issue does not substantially affect an understanding of the author's overall argument.

⁶⁰ It is difficult to ascertain how the ὅπως clause relates to the rest of the sentence. Some scholars have understood ὅπως as an adverb of manner meaning "how" (Friedrich Blass, *Brief an die Hebräer: Text mit Angabe der Rhythmen* [Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1903], 47) or "when" (Stuart, *Hebrews*, 292), but then we would expect it to be used in conjunction with an indicative verb. Much more likely is that ὅπως is a final conjunction expressing purpose (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1244). Scholars have adopted one of four options. The first option is that ὅπως goes with τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον. See J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 100; Sampson, *Hebrews*, 90; Michel, *Hebräer*, 139; John Cochrane O'Neill, "Hebrews II.9," *JTS* 17 (1966): 81–82; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 90; Morris, "Hebrews," 25; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:49; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 112–13; Thiele, "From Son to High Priest," 189–90. Scholars who prefer this option often claim that the verse takes the form of a chiasm:

τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον
διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου
δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον
ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσῃται θανάτου

This reading makes good sense: Jesus was made lower than the angels in order to taste death on behalf of everyone, while Jesus was crowned as a reward for his death. A second option is to take ὅπως as an elaboration of διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου. See Lindsay, *Hebrews*, 1:97; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 25; Flew, "Hebrews," 83; Héring, *Hébreux*, 32; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 77; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 71. A third option tries to make sense of the order of the clauses as it exists in the text. This option prefers to see ὅπως going with δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον. See Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 87; Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 38; Milligan, *Theology*, 99–100; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:34; Peterson, *Perfection*, 55; Terveen, "Jesus in Hebrews," 32–33. While at first blush this reading seems awkward since it would suggest that Jesus was exalted in order to experience death, scholars who adopt this reading claim that it is the exaltation that gives meaning to Jesus' death and makes it efficacious. Michaels adopts this third option, but comes up with a rather idiosyncratic reading. The order of the clauses suggests to him that the "crowning" is not Jesus' exaltation, but his incarnation—a thought, he believes, that is "fully in keeping with Psalm 8 itself" ("Hebrews," 348). Alternatively, but less likely, he suggests the "crowning" could be the crown of thorns Jesus wore before his crucifixion (cf. Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5). R. A. Mitchell believes that the reference is to Jesus' crowning with glory at the transfiguration when God declared Jesus to be his Son; see "Jesus Crowned with the Glory of Sonship," *ExpTim* 3 (1892): 456. The final approach takes ὅπως with the whole sentence. See Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:113; Kendrick, *Hebrews*, 34; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 46; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 76; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 134n46. Wilson suggests that it functions exegetically to the whole sentence (*Hebrews*, 52). This last option seems to make best sense of the grammar in this sentence.

⁶¹ The variant reading, χωρὶς θεοῦ, is poorly attested in only a handful of manuscripts, but was known by several patristic luminaries such as Origen, Eusebius, Ambrose, Jerome, Theodoret, and Theodore of Mopsuestia and was apparently regarded as the more authentic reading by some of them (Hughes, *Hebrews*, 94; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 70n15). Nevertheless, the overwhelming manuscript evidence seems to support χάριτι θεοῦ as the original reading. Many scholars prefer χάριτι θεοῦ as the more authentic reading; see J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 103;

The double reading of the psalm enables the author and the audience to identify with Jesus. On one level they will read Ps 8 in reference to the status and role of humanity in the created order. On another level, they will read the psalm in reference to Jesus and his role in the salvation of humanity. The psalm which speaks of humanity finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus as representative for humanity. The new interpretation of the psalm demonstrates the solidarity that Jesus has with humanity. This solidarity will be elaborated upon in the verses that follow.

Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 115; Rendall, *Hebrews*, 19; Peake, *Hebrews*, 102; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 43–44; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 27; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 21; Teodorico, *Ebrei*, 66; Lenski, *Hebrews*, 78; Johnson, *Humanity*, 115; Andriessen and Lenglet, *Hebreëën*, 58; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 74; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 96; Morris, “Hebrews,” 25; Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 164; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 87; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 53–54; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:116–17; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:124–26; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 200–202; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 92; Michaels, “Hebrews,” 345; Allen, *Hebrews*, 210; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 134–35. The variant reading, however, is the *lector difficilior*, and it is easier to explain how $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ was changed to $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, rather than vice versa. Because of these reasons, quite a few scholars prefer $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ as the more original reading; see Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 83–84; Héring, *Hébreux*, 32–33; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 163; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 59; Michel, *Hebräer*, 140–42; O’Neill, “Hebrews 2:9,” 81–82; J. K. Elliott, “When Jesus Was Apart from God: An Examination of Hebrews 2:9,” *ExpTim* 83 (1972): 339–41; Horning, “Hymns,” 100; Paul Garnet, “Hebrews 2:9: XΑΡΙΤΙ or ΧΩΡΙΣ?” in *Papers of the Ninth International Conference on Patristics Studies, Oxford, 1983* (StPatr 18; ed.; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1985), 324; Braun, *Hebräer*, 57; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 223–24, 236; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 156; Winder, “Sacrificial Christology,” 106–7. If $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ is the more original reading, then there are three general lines of interpretation for understanding the phrase. The first approach translates $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ as “except for God”: Jesus tasted death for everyone except for God—an interpretation that was apparently influenced by 1 Cor 15:27. It seems that this is a truism that hardly needs to be expressed. Moreover, it is not the most natural way to translate the preposition $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$. The second approach translates $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ as “apart from God,” meaning “apart from his divinity.” This interpretation claims that it was only Jesus’ human nature that was crucified on the cross rather than his divine nature. Again, this is not the most natural way for understanding $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. Moreover, it seems to reflect the later concerns of the Nestorians than of issues that the author of Hebrews was dealing with. The third interpretation translates $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ as “without God.” This interpretation correlates well with Jesus’ cry of dereliction on the cross when he felt abandoned by God (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). This interpretation has much to commend as the most natural rendering of $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, as well as being most in line with other NT writings. Nevertheless, even though $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$ is a favorite preposition for the author (out of forty-one occurrences in the NT, the author uses it thirteen times, not including this variant), the idea reflected by this interpretation does not seem to accord well with the context. Attridge remarks that “it does not fit well in the context of the psalm that had spoken of God’s concern for humanity” (*Hebrews*, 77). A possible explanation for the emergence of the reading $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ is that it originated as a marginal note on verse 8 or 9 that it was incorrectly incorporated into the text by a later scribe; see Peake, *Hebrews*, 102; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 53; *Hebrews*, 77; F. F. Bruce, “Textual Problems in the Epistle to the Hebrews” in *Scribes and Scripture: New Testament Essays in Honour of J. Harold Greenlee* (ed. David Alan Black; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 28; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 70n15; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 156.

Having just mentioned the suffering and death (τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου... γεύσεται θανάτου; 2:9) of Jesus, the author is prompted to explain (γάρ) that it was appropriate (ἔπρεπεν) for God to perfect Jesus by means of suffering (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι; 2:10). Here is the first usage of perfection language in Hebrews. Later, Jesus' perfection would again be closely associated with his suffering (5:8–9) and death (7:27–28). Jesus' suffering and death was one of the means by which Jesus would become like other human beings, hence perfecting him for his role as high priest (2:17). It is interesting that the author uses the designation ἀρχηγός here. Jesus had to be perfected as the ἀρχηγός, so that he could later be both the ἀρχηγός and perfecter of faith (12:2). As the ἀρχηγός Jesus cooperates with God to lead (ἀγαγόντα) the children of God into glory (2:10). Jesus helps to bring the same glory to believers that he himself obtained (2:9).

Jesus' solidarity with humanity is then accentuated in the next verse when the author identifies Jesus as "the one who sanctifies" (ὁ ἁγιάζων), while believers are designated as "those who are sanctified" (οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι). This statement adumbrates later comments about Jesus' role in the sanctification of believers (9:13–14; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12, and possibly 12:14). Both Jesus and believers share a common origin (ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες). For this reason, Jesus does not hesitate to identify believers as his "brothers" (ἀδελφοί). In these verses we see the use of familial language; believers are called "sons" (υἱοί; 2:10) and "children" (παιδία; 2:13–14). Later, the author says that God deals with believers as "sons" (12:5–8). By inference, Jesus as the Son of God is their "brother" (2:11–12, 17).⁶² Verse 2:11 thus conveys at the same time Jesus' equality with his brothers, but also his superiority since he is the one who sanctifies them.

The author underscores the solidarity of Jesus with believers by employing prosopopoeia or ethopoeia, attributing Scripture quotations to Jesus (2:12–13). The quotations from Ps 21:23 LXX and Isa 8:17–18 LXX highlight a number of characteristics of Jesus. First, Jesus identifies believers as "brothers," illustrating his solidarity with them. Second, Jesus demonstrates his faithfulness as a proclaimer of God (ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου) to humanity. Third, Jesus evinces his devotion to God through the singing of hymns to him (ὕμνήσω σε). Fourth, Jesus displays his trust in God

⁶² Gray describes Jesus as "the consummate older brother" (*Godly Fear*, 133). Gray concludes that the author employs "inheritance, affection, trustworthiness, sympathy, moral uprightness, accountability, guardianship... and other concepts related to the role of brother in the Hellenistic world as a means of fleshing out the image of Jesus as high priest" (*Godly Fear*, 138).

(ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθώς ἐπ' αὐτῷ). Fifth, the final quotation demonstrates that God deemed Jesus worthy to be entrusted with the care of God's children. Thus, Jesus, in his solidarity with humanity, exemplifies the kind of character that should be imitated by his followers.

In the verses that follow (2:14–18) the author highlights the ways that Jesus was “made like” (ὁμοιωθῆναι) human beings in every respect (κατὰ πάντα; 2:17) and the benefits that accrued to human beings as a result. Jesus evinced likeness to human beings by partaking of flesh and blood (2:14) and experiencing temptation (2:18), suffering (2:18), and death (2:14). The benefits of Jesus' likeness are expressed in manifold ways: he destroyed the power of the devil (2:14), released humanity from enslavement to the fear of death (2:15), took hold of humanity (2:16), made atonement for sins (2:17), and gives help to those who are tempted (2:18). The final benefit that Jesus' likeness to humanity obtains is that it enables him to become a “merciful” (ἐλεήμων) and “faithful” (πιστός) high priest (2:17). These character traits are implicit in all of Jesus' speech and deeds mentioned in chapter 2, but the author will deal with them more explicitly in reverse order in what follows. He first emphasizes Jesus' faithfulness in 3:1–6, before turning to Jesus' mercy later in 4:14–5:10. Jesus' high priesthood will remain a prominent theme for the author in chapter 7 and even into chapters 8–10 when he discusses Jesus' role in the new covenant.

3:1–6

In verse 1 the author turns to address his audience directly. The inferential adverb ὅθεν indicates that he is drawing out the implications of his prior discussion. The author urges his audience with an imperative to “consider” (κατανοήσατε) Jesus; they are to give their concentrated attention and reflection upon the character of Jesus. In this section the author turns their attention specifically to the faithfulness of Jesus.⁶³

The two designations given to Jesus summarize the author's argument to this point. As “apostle” Jesus was the one who was sent by God to proclaim his word and to accomplish the work of redemption. As “high priest” Jesus stands uniquely placed as an intermediary between God and humanity by virtue of both his divine and human natures. Jesus' title as

⁶³ The construction κατανοήσατε... Ἰησοῦν πιστὸν ὄντα can be construed in one of two ways: (1) Ἰησοῦν is the direct object of κατανοήσατε and ὄντα is in the attributive position: “consider Jesus who was faithful”; or (2) the participle ὄντα indicates indirect discourse: “consider that Jesus was faithful” (Koester, *Hebrews*, 243).

“apostle” may also help to set up the comparison with Moses, while the title “high priest” anticipates the comparison with Aaron and Levi later in the discourse.

The author utilizes a brief synkrisis between Jesus and Moses. Jesus was faithful, just as Moses was “in all God’s house” (3:2). The most obvious allusion here is to Num 12:7 LXX where God says that Moses was faithful ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ ὅκῳ μου. Some scholars also see echoes of 1 Sam 2:35 LXX and/or 1 Chr 17:14 LXX.⁶⁴ Koester argues that the “interplay among these texts allows the language to be applied to three aspects of Jesus’ identity”: (1) Moses and Jesus—this statement prepares for the synkrisis between the two figures; (2) Son of God—in 1 Chr 17:13–14 God promises David that his heir, who will be God’s son, will build God’s house; (3) Priest—In 1 Sam 2:35 God tells Eli that he will raise up a faithful priest to replace Eli’s corrupt household.⁶⁵

The author facilitates the synkrisis with an analogy. Jesus has greater glory than Moses, as a builder has greater glory than the house he built (3:3). The analogy cannot be pressed too far since Jesus does not “build” Moses as a builder constructs a house. Neither is Jesus the builder; God is the builder of all things (3:4). The synkrisis apparently compares three things (3:5–6): (1) while Moses is faithful as a *servant* (θεράπων; Num 12:7), Jesus is faithful as a *Son*; (2) while Moses is a member *in* (ἐν) the house, Jesus is the leader *over* (ἐπί) the house; (3) Moses testified to things that would be spoken later (εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν λαληθησομένων); by implication the fuller revelation is spoken through Jesus (1:2).⁶⁶ As Koester notes, the “comment refers to the way that Moses bore witness to what God would speak to later generations ‘by a Son.’”⁶⁷ G. Hughes points out that the significance of the comparison is based on Moses’ “superlative quality as the bearer of revelation.”⁶⁸ While God speaks to other prophets in visions and dreams (Num 12:6), God speaks to Moses directly “mouth to mouth” and not in riddles or dark sayings (Num 12:8). The synkrisis compares good

⁶⁴ D’Angelo, *Moses*, 69; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:72, 76; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 134; Koester, *Hebrews*, 244; Son, *Zion*, 128–33.

⁶⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 244.

⁶⁶ Wickham, *Hebrews*, 21; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 79; Hanson, “Christ in the Old Testament,” 396–97; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 73; Williamson, *Philo*, 468; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 135; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 70–71; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 249; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 135; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 134.

⁶⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 246.

⁶⁸ Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (SNTSMS 36; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9.

versus better; Moses is praised for his faithfulness, but Jesus' faithfulness even surpasses that of Moses'.

This section concludes with a brief admonition (3:6). The author and his audience are members of God's household, but this membership is contingent upon their holding on (κατάσχωμεν) to their confidence (τὴν παρρησίαν) and hope (τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος). The first word παρρησία actually refers to "outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech," but in the NT it often takes the connotation of "courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness."⁶⁹ The author will use the term three more times in his discourse (4:16; 10:19, 35). The author indicates that Christians can have confidence to enter into the presence of God. In those contexts, this confidence arises from Jesus' sacrificial death (10:19) and Jesus' intercessory role as high priest (4:15–16). The second expression, τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος, translates literally as "the boast of hope." Here it refers to the object of one's boasting, which is hope.⁷⁰ Hope will become another important theme for the author (6:11, 18; 7:11; 10:23; 11:1). Hope provides the security that enables the Christian to approach God (7:19). Hope is based on the faithfulness of God (10:23). Here the Christian's confidence and hope arise from all that the author has expressed about Jesus' character to this point, and in particular his faithfulness as Son and High Priest.

3:7–4:13

Jesus' faithfulness becomes an incentive for the author to encourage faithfulness in his audience in the lengthy exhortation that follows (3:7–4:13). The comparison to Moses naturally leads to a discussion of the wilderness generation who followed Moses out of Egypt (3:16). Despite Moses' faithfulness, the wilderness generation failed to enter into the Promised Land (3:18–19). The author begins the exhortation with a lengthy quotation from Ps 94:7–11 LXX. In the original context of the psalm, allusion is made to incidents at Meribah and Massah where the people of Israel complained about the lack of water (Exod 17:1–7; Num 20:2–13). There also

⁶⁹ "παρρησία," BAGD, 630. Vorster remarks that in the NT παρρησία can refer to "an action, i.e. the way of performing an act, and a quality or characteristic feature" ("Meaning, 54). Vanhoye explains that παρρησία "does not simply express subjective confidence; it expresses a right, the freedom of access. Its etymological meaning is the right 'to say all'. In the Greek cities it denoted the right, reserved to freemen, to address the people's assembly" (*Different Priest*, 160).

⁷⁰ Victor Rhee states that τῆς ἐλπίδος is a genitive of content; hence it does not refer to the "act of hoping, but an object for which one hopes"; see "The Christological Aspects of Faith in Hebrews 3:1–4:16," *FgNT* 13 (2000): 82.

seems to be an allusion to Num 32:13 which states that “the LORD’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years.” The verse is a reference back to Num 14 where God punished the unfaithfulness of the Israelites by forcing them to wander in the wilderness for forty years until that whole generation died off.

The wilderness generation failed to enter into God’s “rest” of the Promised Land because of their rebellion (παρεπίκραναν; 3:16), sin (ἀμαρτήσασιν; 3:17), disobedience (ἀπειθήσασιν; 3:18; 4:6), and unbelief (ἀπιστίαν; 3:19; 4:2). The author exhorts his audience not to follow the negative example of the wilderness generation by allowing unbelief (ἀπιστίας) to lead them to fall away (ἀποστήναι; 3:12) from God and to be hardened with the deceitfulness of sin (ἀμαρτίας; 3:13). He urges his audience to encourage one another daily so that they will not repeat the mistakes of the wilderness generation (3:13).

The author indicates that they are μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:14). The noun μέτοχος may mean either “sharers, participants” or “partners, companions.”⁷¹ Hence, scholars have generally followed two lines of interpretation regarding this expression. Some interpreters take the expression to mean “partakers of/in Christ.”⁷² They have oneness or union with Christ. Other interpreters take the expression to mean “partners with Christ.”⁷³ They share in the same activities with Christ. Such a partnership seems to be expressed in the term “brothers” in 2:11, 17. Both usages are found elsewhere in Hebrews. In 1:9 μέτοχος clearly means “companion” (cf. Luke 5:7), while in three other places the meaning “partakers” seems warranted (3:1; 6:4; 12:8). In the last three instances μέτοχος is used with a genitive, while in 1:9 μέτοχος appears absolutely, and it is part of a Scripture quotation and may not reflect the author’s normal usage of the word. On the whole,

⁷¹ “μέτοχος,” BAGD, 514.

⁷² This meaning is reflected in the following translations: “partakers of Christ” (NASB, NKJV); “share in Christ” (NIV, ESV). Scholars who take this line of interpretation include: Milligan, *Theology*, 94n1; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 86; Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 37; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 94; Teodorico, *Ebrei*, 83–84; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:76–77; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 150; Morris, “Hebrews,” 36; Braun, *Hebräer*, 96; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 96; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 117–18; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 227; Mackie, *Eschatology*, 52–53; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118; Easter, “Let Us Go to Him,” 329–30; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 188.

⁷³ This meaning is reflected in the following translations: “partners of Christ” (NRSV, NAB); “Christ’s partners” (NEB); “companions of the Messiah” (HCSB). Scholars who prefer this line of interpretation include: Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:177–78; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 86–87; Kuss, *Hebräer*, 52; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 78; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 91; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 107; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 77; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 101; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1167; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:87; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 43; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 151; Koester, *Hebrews*, 260; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 136; McKnight, “Hebrews,” 96; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 90.

then, the idea of “sharers, participants, partakers of/in Christ” seems best. It is possible, however, that both ideas are contained in the expression.⁷⁴ At any rate, the audience’s participation or partnership is based on Jesus’ partaking of human nature. As Weiss points out, “Seiner ‘Teilhabe’ an ihnen (2,14) korrespondiert ihre ‘Teilhabe’ an ihm.”⁷⁵

Such participation or partnership is contingent upon their “holding fast” (κατάσχωμεν) the beginning of their ὑποστάσεως. The noun ὑπόστασις may refer to the “substance, actual existence, reality, or essence” of something, as it does in 1:3.⁷⁶ It may also refer to the “foundation or substructure” of something, and hence provide the objective basis for “confidence, courage, resolution, steadfastness.”⁷⁷ This latter sense seems best here and hence this verse expresses a similar idea to 3:6 in which the verb κατάσχωμεν was also used.

The author continues his admonishment into chapter 4 which begins with an appeal to the emotion of fear (φοβηθῶμεν). The author urges his audience to enter into God’s rest while the opportunity still remains.⁷⁸ The author’s generation has had the good news preached (εὐηγγελισμένοι) to them just as the wilderness generation did, but the wilderness generation failed to respond in faith to what they had heard (4:2). But the way into God’s rest remains open for those who respond in faith in the current generation (4:3). Through the lens of Gen 2:2, the author construes God’s rest as eschatological Sabbath rest and not the rest of the Promised Land (4:4–5). The key word “today” (σήμερον) together with the fact that the psalm postdates the entry into the Promised Land signals to the author that Joshua had failed to give the Israelites rest and the invitation remains open for the people of God to enter into God’s eschatological Sabbath rest (4:6–9).

If 4:10 indeed refers to Jesus, this verse anticipates the designation of Jesus’ role as the believer’s “forerunner” into the heavenly realm (6:20). Moreover, the sentiment expressed here would align well with the notion

⁷⁴ Windisch, *Hebräer*, 32; Michel, *Hebräer*, 189; Enrique Nardoni, “Partakers in Christ (Hebrews 3.14),” *NTS* 37 (1991): 457; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 130; Allen, *Hebrews*, 265–66.

⁷⁵ H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 264; see also Käsemann, *Wandering*, 156–57; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 1:190; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 151.

⁷⁶ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1895; this idea is preferred by Attridge, *Hebrews*, 119; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:82; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 151.

⁷⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1895. Many commentators prefer the sense of “confidence” or “assurance”; e.g., Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 79; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 152; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 101; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 227–28; Koester, *Hebrews*, 472.

⁷⁸ The verb “enter” (εἰσερχομαι) appears eight times in 4:1–11 and the noun (κατάπαυσις) and verb (καταπαύω) forms for “rest” appear six and three times respectively.

that Jesus had now ceased from his sacrificial labors and entered into the heavenly realm (9:12; 10:12). Nevertheless, in this context, the passage is more likely referring to the believer in general.

The author concludes with a hortatory subjunctive urging his audience to hasten (σπουδάσωμεν) to enter God's rest lest they lose the opportunity due to disobedience (ἀπειθείας). The author rounds off this section with a statement on God's word. The metaphor of a two-edged sword highlights the penetrating and probing quality of God's word (4:12).⁷⁹ The author reminds his audience that no one can hide from God's penetrating gaze (4:13), thus underscoring the warnings of this section.

Although Jesus does not appear prominently in this section, a contrast between the faithfulness of Jesus (3:1–6) and the unfaithfulness of the wilderness generation (3:16–19) is implied. The author exhorts his audience that if they want to participate in all of the benefits that Jesus provides, then they need to exhibit faithfulness and obedience in their lives by holding firm their confidence in the faith (3:6, 14) and by striving to enter into God's rest (4:1, 11).

4:14–5:70

Verses 4:14–16 form a transitional unit; they both look back to the previous discussion (3:1–4:13), while also preparing for what lies ahead (5:1–10:18).⁸⁰ The author picks up the theme of the high priesthood of Jesus that was adumbrated in 2:17 and 3:1. In this section the author focuses upon the merciful aspect of Jesus' high priesthood. For the first time in the discourse the author closely aligns Jesus' two most important titles: Son of God and high priest (4:14). The connection will be implied later in 5:5–6 and made more explicit in 7:28–8:1. For the first time the author also makes it explicit that Jesus has entered into the heavenly realm (διεληλυθότα τοὺς

⁷⁹ Swetnam contends that ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ refers to Jesus as the Word, along the same lines as the Johannine usage; see *Jesus and Isaac*, 151–52; “Jesus as Λόγος in Hebrews 4:12–13,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 214–24. But this is unlikely since there are no indicators to signal that the author has suddenly shifted to talking about Jesus again, and it would be an odd metaphor to describe Jesus as “sharper” than a sword. In the immediate context, God's word refers back to the psalm quotation in 3:7–11, but the author is also presenting a general principle here.

⁸⁰ George Guthrie says that the unit contains “overlapping constituents,” by which he means that the passage is “used simultaneously as the conclusion of one block of material and the introduction to the next” (*Structure*, 102). Bruce Longenecker identifies the unit as a “bridge paragraph” in which overlapping material of two text units is found in a transitional, self-contained paragraph (*Rhetoric*, 37).

οὐρανούς). One may have inferred this from earlier exaltation and glorification language (1:3, 13; 2:9). The importance of this entrance into the heavenly realm will become clearer as the author develops his argument; while the Levitical priests served in a temporary earthly sanctuary, Jesus now serves in an eternal heavenly sanctuary (8:1–2; 9:11, 24).

Jesus' dual identity as Son of God and high priest and his entrance into the heavenly realm serve as encouragement for the audience to hold on (κρατῶμεν) to their confession (ὁμολογίας; 4:14). The hortatory subjunctive of κρατέω is reminiscent of 3:6 and 3:14 in which a similar verb (κατέχω) was used to urge their tenacity in the faith. A similar combination of these words will also be found in 10:23 where the author urges the audience to hold fast (κατέχωμεν) the confession (ὁμολογίαν) of hope. According to Attridge, ὁμολογία was a term used in the early church to denote a profession of faith. He explains that the "term seems to be used in Hebrews in a rather general sense of 'that which we confess'" and includes the contents and not just the act of confession.⁸¹ Scholars have debated what specifically this content could be. It is possible that such titles as apostle or high priest (3:1) were included,⁸² but it seems that "Jesus, the Son of God" formed part of it.⁸³ It is likely that Jesus was the object of this confession of faith.⁸⁴

The author proceeds to expound on Jesus' high priestly character using the rhetorical device of litotes (4:15).⁸⁵ As high priest Jesus is able to sympathize (συμπαθεῖσαι) with the weaknesses (ἀσθενείας) of humanity. The author had already explained in 2:10–18 how Jesus identified with humanity by partaking of flesh and blood, and by experiencing temptation, suffering, and death. Here the author reemphasizes the fact that Jesus experiences temptation (πεπειρασμένον). The complete likeness of the temptation is underscored (κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα), but the author is quick to add that Jesus did not succumb (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας). Here is an example of

⁸¹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 108.

⁸² G. D. Cloete thinks it is unlikely that these titles were part of the confession since they do not appear elsewhere in the NT; see "'Let Us Hold Fast Our Confession'" in *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church* (eds. G. D. Cloete and D. J. Smit; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 94.

⁸³ Cloete, "Confession," 94; Rhee, "Christological Aspects," 78; Pfitzner, "Tradition," 70.

⁸⁴ James Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 1–6," *Bib* 53 (1972): 368–85; Rhee, "Christological Aspects," 78.

⁸⁵ Herbert Weir Smyth explains that litotes "is understatement so as to intensify, affirmation expressed by the negative of the contrary"; see *Greek Grammar* (ed. Gordon M. Messing; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 680. The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* says that litotes (*deminutio*) was used "to avoid the impression of arrogant display" (4.38.50).

amplification as the author highlights Jesus' uniqueness in relation to the rest of humanity. Jesus' sinlessness is also an important contrast to the Levitical high priests who, because of their own weaknesses, needed to offer sacrifices on their own behalf before offering sacrifices on behalf of others (5:2–3; 7:26–27).

Jesus' identification with and sympathy for humanity are the bases for the Christian's boldness or confidence (*παρρησίας*) to approach God, here expressed by the metonymic term, "throne" (4:16). The author adds further encouragement by citing God's gracious character, denoted by the descriptive genitive, *τῆς χάριτος*, and by indicating God's beneficent gifts of mercy (*ἔλεος*) and grace (*χάρις*) for timely assistance (*εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν*) for the believer.

The author proceeds to identify the role and qualifications of priests in general (5:1–4) before demonstrating how Jesus fulfilled these qualifications (5:5–10). Witherington states, "From a rhetorical viewpoint, beginning at Hebrews 5:1 our author enumerates the advantages, honorable titles, claims to fame that Jesus has when it comes to the priesthood."⁸⁶ Generally, priests are appointed from among men on behalf of men in order to deal with matters pertaining to God, and specifically, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (5:1). The author mentions two qualifications for priesthood. First, priests must be able to deal temperately (*μετριοπαθεῖν*) with their fellow human beings who are prone to ignorance and wandering (*τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν καὶ πλανωμένοις*; 5:2). As already indicated in the previous chapter, the verb *μετριοπαθέω* means "to moderate one's passions or feelings." The reason why priests must treat fellow human beings moderately is because they themselves are beset with "weakness" (*ἀσθένειαν*). They are required to offer sacrifices on their own behalf before offering sacrifices on behalf of the people (5:3). Two implicit contrasts with Jesus are made in these verses. First, while priests have committed sin, Jesus is without sin. Second, while priests moderate their feelings towards others, Jesus actively sympathizes. The second qualification for priesthood is that one does not obtain the honor or office (*τιμὴν*) for oneself, but one must be called by God (5:4).

The author proceeds to show in reverse order how Jesus fulfills these two qualifications (5:5–7).⁸⁷ First, Jesus does not assume the office of high priest for himself. Literally, the author says that Jesus "did not glorify

⁸⁶ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 192.

⁸⁷ The author has already demonstrated Jesus' solidarity with humanity in chapter 2, so this qualification is not repeated here.

himself" (οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν). Jesus' humility becomes evident in the fact that, although he was the Son of God, he did not arrogate the office for himself, but allowed God to appoint him. Two Scripture quotations are utilized as divine testimony to emphasize this point (5:5b–6). Here the author conceives God speaking directly to Jesus (ὁ λαλήσας πρὸς αὐτόν). McCruden detects a difference in the words used of Jesus and of the high priests in general: "While Aaron was called *καλούμενος*, Christ is spoken to directly by God *λαλήσας*."⁸⁸ The divine testimony witnesses to Jesus' trustworthy character to assume the office of high priest. The first quotation, taken from Ps 2:7 LXX, was first introduced in 1:5, where God identified Jesus as his Son. The second quotation is taken from Ps 109:4 LXX. Verse 1 of the same psalm was quoted in 1:13, forming an *inclusio* with Ps 2:7 LXX. Now the author uses another verse from the same psalm to indicate that the God who declared Jesus as his Son also appoints Jesus as priest. It is possible to construe these two acts as occurring in the same moment of time, that is, when God declared Jesus as his Son, he also appointed Jesus as high priest. The introduction of Ps 109:4 LXX also has another significance which will become apparent later in the discourse: the quotation introduces the figure of Melchizedek, whose priesthood will be likened to Jesus' in chapter 7.

Jesus' second qualification is expressed through a vivid description (*ekphrasis* or *diatyposis*) of Jesus praying "with loud cries and tears" (μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων; 5:7). The author here offers a rare glimpse into the earthly life (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ) of Jesus with a scene that is reminiscent of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane in the Synoptic accounts. This illustration from the life of Jesus implies that he is able to sympathize with human weaknesses because he too experienced emotional agony in time of great need. This scene also evokes Jesus' trust in and devotion to God, as he turned to God in prayer during his time of need (2:13a), and his piety (εὐλαβείας) which led to the answer of his prayers. Jesus' character here again serves as a model for the audience to follow.

The author then tells us that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered (ἐμαθεν ἄφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν; 5:8). Witherington rightly points out that "[a]nother regular topic of encomiums—the education of the hero figure—is broached here when the discussion turns to what Jesus learned through suffering—namely obedience."⁸⁹ The author is not

⁸⁸ McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 111.

⁸⁹ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 193.

implying that Jesus once was disobedient since he has already told us that Jesus was without sin (4:15). Instead, the author is indicating that Jesus had to demonstrate obedience in new ways, when he experienced suffering during the days of his incarnation in the flesh. McKelvey suggests that Jesus' education through suffering anticipates 12:4–11, where the audience's suffering is described as a type of education (παιδεία).⁹⁰

The author makes a close connection between Jesus' suffering, obedience, and perfection (5:8–9). Jesus' perfection has nothing to do with moral perfection, but his fitness to become the "source of eternal salvation" (ἀΐτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου). A very similar idea was mentioned in 2:10 where it says that God perfected Jesus as the pioneer or author of salvation (τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας). In 5:9, however, the author indicates that Jesus is the source of salvation to those who obey him (τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ). Attridge rightly notes the implications of Jesus' obedience for the audience: "Jesus is presented as one who 'learns obedience' (ὑπακοήν) in the midst of suffering because that is what the addressees are called to do."⁹¹ In conclusion, the author returns to the point made in 5:5–6 that Jesus was designated by God (προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) to be high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10).

5:11–6:20

Before elaborating further on the high priesthood of Jesus, the author apparently felt the need to address some important issues with his audience. The characterization of Jesus hardly figures in this portion of the discourse. The mention of Melchizedek prompts the author to digress into an extended excursus. The author has much to say (πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος) and the subject matter is difficult to explain (δυσερμήνευτος λέγειν) to his sluggish (νωθροί) audience (5:11). He chastises them for their spiritual immaturity (5:12–14). They need to be taught again the basics of the Christian faith, even though they have been Christians long enough to teach others (5:12). The author employs a metaphor ("you need milk, not solid food") to underscore the state of their spiritual immaturity. The metaphor becomes the basis for the analogy to follow, which contrasts the character of immature and mature believers (5:13–14). By implication, the subject matter that is to follow is "solid food" fitting only for the mature believer. This part of the excursus serves the important function of alerting the

⁹⁰ McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 33.

⁹¹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 153.

audience to pay special attention to the subject matter that the author is about to address.

Despite the immaturity of his readers the author resolves to proceed with his more profound teachings and he urges them to leave behind (ἀφέντες) the elementary teachings and to move (φέρωμεθα) towards maturity (6:1). The passive voice of φέρω suggests a divine passive; the audience must surrender themselves to God who will bear them towards maturity. As noted in the previous chapter, the expression τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον is ambiguous; it may refer to the message given by Jesus (subjective genitive) or the message about Jesus (objective genitive). If it refers to the former, then it conveys a similar idea to that expressed in 2:3; the basic doctrines of the Christian faith originated in Jesus' teaching ministry. The author enumerates some of the basic teachings in 6:1b–2.

6:4–6 is one of the most controversial passages in the NT. This passage cannot be addressed fully in this study. The literature on this passage is immense and a proper analysis of the passage demands a full-length study in itself.⁹² The view taken here is that the author issues a warning about a real danger (not a hypothetical situation) that poses a real threat to Christian believers (not unbelievers).⁹³ The author warns about the impossibility of repentance after one has fallen aside (παραπεσόντας) from the Christian experience outlined in 6:4–5. This “falling aside” likely entails the same type of rebellion, sin, disobedience, and unbelief that was characteristic of the wilderness generation as noted above (3:16–19). The reasons for this impossibility are expressed in the two present active participles (ἀνασταυροῦντας, παραδειγματίζοντας) in 6:6. Here the warning is closely related to the believer's relationship to the person of Jesus. They

⁹² David Allen provides the most comprehensive treatment of 6:4–8 found in any commentary (*Hebrews*, 344–93). He outlines five major interpretations of the passage: (1) the Loss of Salvation view; (2) the Hypothetical view; (3) the Tests of Greatness view; (4) the Means of Salvation view; and (5) the Loss of Rewards view. The first view is the classical Arminian position; the passage speaks about true believers who are able to apostasize and hence lose their salvation. Views two through four represents variations on the Calvinist position. The passage addresses unbelievers; true believers are unable to apostasize and lose their salvation. The final view is a mediating position; the passage speaks about real believers who do not apostasize, but do incur various judgments, but not the loss of salvation, due to their disobedience (370–77). See the footnotes on pages 370–71 for his bibliography on each of these positions. See also Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007) for a presentation of the competing interpretations.

⁹³ The four participial clauses in 6:4–5 is best interpreted as describing believers. Since the participle παραπεσόντας in 6:6 has the same tense, person, and number as the four previous participles, it does not describe a conditional or hypothetical situation.

crucify Jesus again and expose him to public shame. The verb ἀνασταυρόω may mean “crucify afresh” or simply “crucify.”⁹⁴ Tasker contends that the “word ἀνασταυρόω in this passage seems to be used not in the sense of ‘crucifying *again*,’ for Christ cannot be crucified again, but in the classical sense of the word, ‘to raise *up* on the cross’ with a view to exposing the shame of the criminal.”⁹⁵ But surely this objection overlooks the fact that this word could be used in a figurative sense and it avoids the question of how disobedient Christians could crucify Jesus in the first place. Rhee argues that the context suggests the meaning “crucify again,” noting the usage of the adverb πάλιν (“again”) in 6:1, 6.⁹⁶ Turning aside from the faith is likened to *as if* they were crucifying Jesus again. The verb παραδειγματίζω is derived from παράδειγμα meaning “example” and hence means “to make an example” of someone or “to make a show or spectacle” of someone.⁹⁷ Schlier states that the word connotes an exposure to “public obloquy.”⁹⁸ The author thus paints a very vivid image of the disobedient Christian subjecting Jesus, again, to the public ignominy (cf. 12:2) of crucifixion. The analogy in 6:7–8 underscores the contrasting fates of the faithful and unfaithful Christian. The one who bears fruit will be blessed by God; the one who does not will incur his judgment.

Despite the ominous warning in 6:4–8 the author is convinced of a better outcome (τὰ κρείσσονα) regarding his audience (6:9). This confidence is based upon two things: (1) the just character of God (οὐ ἄδικος ὁ θεός),⁹⁹ and (2) the character of the recipients as evidenced by their deeds and love which are manifested in past and present service to fellow believers (6:10). The author desires that his audience exhibit diligence (σπουδήν; 6:11) in their lives. The noun σπουδή can mean (1) “haste, speed”; (2) “zeal, pains, trouble, effort”; or (3) “eagerness, earnestness, diligence.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, the noun implies urgency, intensity, exertion, and effort. Their efforts are directed towards (πρός) the full realization (πληροφορίαν) of their hope. The verb πληροφορέω means “to bring to full measure, fill or fulfill completely, satisfy fully” but it can also mean “to convince fully.” The noun form, however, generally takes on the latter meaning of “full

⁹⁴ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 121.

⁹⁵ Tasker, *Gospel*, 55; see also Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 93.

⁹⁶ Rhee, “Christology,” 90.

⁹⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1308.

⁹⁸ Schlier, “παραδειγματίζω,” *TDNT* 2:32.

⁹⁹ Another example of litotes.

¹⁰⁰ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1630–31; “σπουδή,” BAGD, 763–64.

assurance, certainty.”¹⁰¹ The verse thus aligns well with other expressions of confidence and assurance elsewhere in the book (3:6, 14; 4:16; 10:19, 22, 35; 11:1).

The purpose (ἵνα) of their diligence is twofold: (1) that they may not be sluggish, ὀλιγοί—this is the same adjective used of the audience in 5:11, thus creating a nice inclusio for this hortatory section. The adjective is in direct contrast to the diligence (σπουδή) he wants his audience to display, and it exemplifies the kind of disposition and behavior that he wants his audience to avoid elsewhere (10:39; 12:3, 12–13). (2) That they may be imitators (μιμηταί) of those who inherit the promises (6:12). Specific imitation language is also found in 13:7 where the author urges his readers to imitate the faith of their leaders. The author does not specify here what he means by the “promises.” Earlier they referred to the entry in God’s rest (4:1). In 9:15 the promise refers to the eternal inheritance. In 8:6 the new covenant is enacted upon better promises, whose content is described in the quotation from Jer 38:31–34 LXX in 8:8–13. Those who inherit these promises achieve this goal by means of “faith” (πίστεως) and “patience” (μακροθυμίας). The language of “patience” anticipates 10:36, where the author asserts that endurance in doing the will of God leads to the obtaining of his promises. The juxtaposition of the language of “faith” and “the promises” adumbrates the larger discussion on faith in chapter 11 (see particularly verses 9, 13, 17, 33, 39).

In the immediate context, the mention of the promises leads to a consideration of the example of Abraham, who obtained the promise given to him by means of his own patient endurance (6:15). The quotation from Gen 22:17 supplies the content of the promise: blessing and the multiplication of offspring (6:14). The certainty of the fulfillment of the promise was based on two “unchangeable things”: God’s promise¹⁰² and God’s oath (6:13, 17–18). The example drawn from the life of Abraham was intended to encourage (παρακλῆσιν) the audience to seize or take hold (κρατῆσαι) of the hope lying before them (6:18). The God who fulfilled his promise to Abraham in the past is the same God who makes his promises to the author’s current generation. The object of their hope, then, is the promises that God has made. Grant Osborne demonstrates

¹⁰¹ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1419; “πληροφορέω,” BAGD, 670; Delling, “πληροφορέω,” *TDNT* 6:309–11.

¹⁰² So Bruce, *Hebrews*, 154; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:152; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 342; Koester, *Hebrews*, 328. Alternatively, it may refer to God’s will (τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ; 6:17).

that the author's language of "promise" and "hope" points to a present possession of a future reality.¹⁰³ This hope, then, is not wishful thinking but a certainty. This certainty is made explicit through the vivid nautical metaphor of the anchor (6:19). The anchor is appropriately described with two adjectives with similar meanings: (1) ἀσφαλής means "firm, sure, certain, safe, secure";¹⁰⁴ (2) βέβαιος means "firm, permanent, secure, reliable, dependable, certain."¹⁰⁵ The metaphor of the anchor thus connotes stability and permanence. The author extends the metaphor in a rather unusual way. He says that the anchor enters inside the veil (εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος). The "veil" is a metonymy for the tabernacle or sanctuary, which in turn is a metaphor for the heavenly realm. Johnson remarks, "The image, then, is that the anchor (we must picture a rope attached) is entering within the inner place of the temple (the holy of holies), as if it were a grappling hook to which the souls of believers were connected."¹⁰⁶ To say that something exists in heaven suggests that it is imperishable and secure.¹⁰⁷ It is into this heavenly realm (δου) that Jesus has entered as the "forerunner" (πρόδρομος; 6:20). The believer's hope is grounded in the confidence that Jesus has prepared the way for the believer to enter into the heavenly realm. The author interestingly associates the title of forerunner with that of high priest. As noted in the previous chapter, the connecting of these two titles provides a subtle synthesis between the priesthood of Jesus and the Levitical priesthood. Levitical priests were not forerunners since no one followed them into the holy of holies. The mention of Melchizedek forms a nice inclusio with 5:10 and signals that the excursus has come full circle and now the author is ready to resume the main thread of his argument in chapter 7.

7:1–28

In chapter 7 the author defines what it means for Jesus' high priesthood to be "according to the order of Melchizedek" (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ). Two Scripture passages will be important for the author's exposition. Verses 1–10 focus on Gen 14:17–20, while verses 11–28 center around Ps 109:4 LXX.

¹⁰³ Osborne, "Soteriology," 154–55.

¹⁰⁴ "ἀσφαλής," BAGD, 119.

¹⁰⁵ "βέβαιος," BAGD, 138.

¹⁰⁶ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 173.

¹⁰⁷ Matt 5:12; 6:20; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:23; 12:33; 18:22; 2 Cor 5:1; Col 1:5; 1 Pet 1:4.

The author begins with a summary of the Genesis account (7:1–2a). It is clear that the author is using the LXX version for the basis of his exposition. The author only uses the parts of the story that are pertinent to his discussion. For example, he does not mention that Melchizedek offered bread and wine to Abram, nor does he describe the contents of Melchizedek's blessing of Abram. The author begins his exegesis with an etymological analysis of Melchizedek's name (7:2b). The author claims that Melchizedek means "king of righteousness," while Melchizedek's title, King of Salem, means "king of peace." It is not important for our purposes to decide if the author is correct in his etymologies.¹⁰⁸ Although the author does not elaborate on these etymologies any further, they serve to characterize Jesus as a righteous and peaceful king since Melchizedek is likened to Jesus (ἄφωμοιωμένος; 7:3). Earlier, Jesus is described as a king who loved righteousness and whose reign was characterized by righteousness (1:8–9). Koester remarks that this characterization "is important for the 'righteous' who now endure adversity (10:38; 11:4, 7) in the hope of joining the righteous who have a place in God's heavenly city (12:23)."¹⁰⁹ The mature believer is one who is acquainted with the "word of righteousness" (λόγου δικαιοσύνης; 5:13). Later, the author will remark that discipline produces "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν . . . δικαιοσύνης) in believers (12:11). The author also urges his audience to "pursue peace with everyone" (12:14).

The fact that Melchizedek holds both a royal and a priestly office intimates one of the ways in his priesthood prefigures Jesus' priesthood. As already noted, Jesus' royal status is implicit in his title as Son of God. The author has previously hinted at the union of these two roles in Jesus (1:3; 5:5–6) and he will do so again in his transition to the next phase of his argument: Jesus is a high priest who is seated at the right hand of God (8:1).

In 7:3 the author employs a type of argument from silence to identify two additional aspects of Melchizedek's character. First, Melchizedek has no parentage or genealogy (ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος). This description is important for the author's argument since it indicates that Melchizedek's priesthood was not dependent on his lineage (7:6).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of the etymologies, see Fitzmyer, "Melchizedek," 229–33.

¹⁰⁹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 347–48.

¹¹⁰ McKelvey observes, "In the normal course of events any significant male without an ancestry and genealogy would have been a nobody, but the author adroitly circumvents this and uses the silence of Genesis on Melchizedek's ancestry and genealogy to his advantage" (*Pioneer*, 68–69).

Likewise, Jesus' priesthood is not dependent on his lineage (7:16) since he was from the tribe of Judah (7:14). Jesus was not a priest on earth (8:4) since the law required that priests originate from the tribe of Levi. Second, eternality and an everlasting priesthood are attributed to Melchizedek (7:8). Again, this is important for the author's argument since he indicates that Jesus' priesthood is permanent and everlasting (7:16–17, 24–25, 28).

In 7:4–10 the author makes two additional arguments for the greatness of Melchizedek. First, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. In the mind of the author, the one who blesses is greater than the one who is blessed (7:7). Second, Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham. Though he does not state it explicitly, it is clear that the author believes that the one who receives tithes is greater than the one who tithes. Hence, Melchizedek is greater than Abraham on two accounts. By extension Melchizedek is also greater than Abraham's descendant Levi, who was the eponymous progenitor of the priestly class (7:9–10). By implication, then, Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood. By establishing the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood, he also affirms the superiority of Jesus' priesthood since his priesthood belongs to the same order.

The emergence of Jesus' new priesthood implies that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood (7:11) and consequently there was a need for a change in the law (7:12). Under the old covenant Jesus could not be a priest since he was from the tribe of Judah and the old law required that priests be from the tribe of Levi (7:13–14). Here is a rare reference to Jesus' earthly life. Under the new covenant Jesus obtained his priesthood not by the requirement of lineage (κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης), but according to "the power of an indestructible life" (κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου; 7:16). As noted in the previous chapter, this "indestructible life" refers either to the event of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation, or to his eternal nature which was not ultimately dissolved by death.

For the second time the author uses Ps 109:4 LXX as the proof text for his argument (7:17). Earlier in 5:6 he uses the verse to demonstrate that Jesus was appointed as high priest. There the emphasis was on the phrase "You are a priest." Here in this context the emphasis is on the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ("forever"). Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood because it is not based on an earthly lineage but on Jesus' eternality. The Levitical priesthood was based on the law which was "weak" (ἀσθενές) and "useless" (ἀνωφελές) and unable to bring perfection, but Jesus' priesthood effects a "better hope" (κρείττονος ἐλπίδος) which enables the believer to approach God (7:18–19). The author will elaborate on this distinction later in his discussion.

Verses 20–22 propose another reason for the superiority of Jesus' priesthood. Jesus' priesthood was established by God's oath, whereas by implication the Levitical priesthood was not.¹¹¹ As Milligan explains, "the very fact that the Levitical priesthood was appointed without an oath was in itself a proof of its provisional and temporary character."¹¹² For the third time the author uses Ps 109:4 LXX as the proof text for his contention. Here the emphasis is on the first part of the verse which reads, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind" (7:21). Here one is reminded of the earlier discussion on God's oath (6:13–18). God's oath underscores the unchangeableness of his purpose. So, while the Levitical priesthood is replaced by Jesus' priesthood, Jesus' priesthood is permanent. The permanency of Jesus' priesthood enables Jesus to become the "guarantee" (ἔγγυος) of a better covenant (7:22). The legal metaphor emphasizes Jesus' reliability to deliver the promises of the new covenant to his followers. The verse also points forward to the author's extended discussion on the benefits of the new covenant (8:7–10:18) and to Jesus as the mediator of that covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

In 7:23–25 the author highlights two ways in which Jesus' eternal nature benefits believers. The Levitical priests existed in great numbers because of their mortality. Multiplicity implied incompleteness and inefficacy for the author, and the fact that priests continually had to be replaced points to the impermanence of the Levitical priesthood. By contrast, Jesus' eternality enabled him to hold his priesthood permanently and hence he can save forever or completely (εἰς τὸ παντελές) those who approach God. The second benefit is that Jesus always lives to make intercession for believers. His intercession arises out of his solidarity with (2:10–18) and sympathy for (4:15) humanity.

The author's argument on the priesthood of Jesus draws to a close in 7:26–28. The quick succession of adjectives and participial clauses in 7:26 highlights the ethical (holiness) and physical (exaltation) separation that Jesus has from the rest of sinful humanity. Witherington remarks that "From a rhetorical viewpoint, our author is following the rules for an encomium quite well here by describing and lauding the 'excellences,' in

¹¹¹ Aristotle identifies "oaths" (ὅρκος) as one of the "inartificial proofs" in forensic rhetoric (*Rhetoric* 1.15.2, 27–33). The decision to accept an oath depends upon the character of the one giving the oath. Here of course God is the one making the oath and God's character is trustworthy.

¹¹² Milligan, *Theology*, 123.

this case the personal characteristics of the hero figure.”¹¹³ Jesus appropriately uses these virtues for the benefit of others; he offered up himself on behalf of others (7:27). One can discern four distinctions between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus. First, the Levitical priests repeatedly (“daily”; καθ’ ἡμέραν) offered up sacrifices; Jesus offered up his sacrifice once (ἐφάπαξ). Second, the Levitical priests were required to offer up sacrifices on their own behalf because of their sinfulness; Jesus, because he was sinless, could offer himself. Third, the Levitical priesthood was established by the law; Jesus’ priesthood was established by God’s oath. Fourth, weak (ἔχοντας ἀσθένειαν) men are appointed to the Levitical priesthood; Jesus was appointed to his priesthood as Son made perfect forever. Here “Son” is used without an article, as it was in 1:2, thus stressing again the qualitative aspect of Jesus’ status or character; as “Son” Jesus stands in a unique relationship with God.

8:1–10:18

The discussion moves from the topic of Jesus’ priesthood to the topic of the superiority of the new covenant. The transition is marked by the author’s articulation of the “main point” (κεφάλαιον) of his argument: Jesus is a high priest who sits at the right hand of God (8:1). Once again, Jesus’ royal and priestly roles appear together. Verses 2–5 are preparatory for his lengthy discussion of the new covenant. The author introduces two new titles to describe Jesus. The two titles are interrelated but describe different dimensions of Jesus’ role in the new covenant. The author will elaborate upon both dimensions in the discussion that follows. First, Jesus is described as “a minister [λειτουργός] in the sanctuary and the true tent” (8:2).¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Witherington, *Hebrews*, 250.

¹¹⁴ The two expressions τῶν ἁγίων . . . καὶ τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς may be construed as referring to the same thing—καὶ being used exegetically; see Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 587; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 216; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 104–5; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:234; Héring, *Hébreux*, 76; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 133; Michel, *Hebräer*, 288; A. P. Salom, “*Ta Hagia* in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *AUSS* 5 (1967): 65–66; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 281–82n55; Peterson, *Perfection*, 130–31; Braun, *Hebräer*, 228; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 163; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 180; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 432; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:200–201; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 402; Koester, *Hebrews*, 376; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 288n10; Allen, *Hebrews*, 442; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 354–55; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 89; or to a distinction between the inner sanctuary and the sanctuary as a whole; see Vanhoye, “Par la tente,” 4; Andriessen, “Zelt,” 87; Sabourin, *Priesthood*, 203; Hofius, *Vorhang*, 59–60; Nissilä, *Hohepriestermotiv*, 156; Loader, *Sohn*, 163; Laub, *Bekenntnis*, 203–7; Rissi, *Theologie*, 37–41; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 218; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:53; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:82. The second option is more likely; the expressions echo Lev 16:20 where the holy of holies and the tent of meeting are mentioned together; cf. Lev 16: 20, 33 (Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 160). Johnson

The title λειτουργός emphasizes the cultic aspect of Jesus' high priestly service. Jesus' service in the heavenly sanctuary is contrasted with the role of the Levitical priests who serve in the earthly sanctuary, which is only a "sketch and shadow" (ὁποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ) of the heavenly sanctuary (8:5). The introduction of the heavenly sanctuary at this point anticipates his discussion in chapter 9. The author explains that Jesus did not serve as a priest while he was on earth since he did not belong to the priestly lineage according to the law (8:4), but now Jesus has obtained the more excellent ministry as the "mediator" (μεσίτης) of a better covenant (8:6). The author's designation of Jesus as "mediator" suggests Jesus' reliability to carry out the terms—the promises—of the covenant for believers.

The contents of the promises are contained in the quotation from Jer 38:31–34 LXX (8:8–12). The author will again quote portions of Jer 38 LXX in 10:16–17, thus forming an inclusio for the whole section, but the selections also highlight what is most important for the author in this passage for his argument: the internalization of the law upon the hearts and minds of believers and the forgiveness of sins. Since the first covenant was flawed, there was a necessity to seek for a new covenant (8:7), which makes the first covenant obsolete (8:13).

9:1 introduces the subject matter in the next phase of the author's argument. The old covenant had two aspects. He first describes the "earthly sanctuary" and its furniture in verses 2–5. He then describes the "regulations for worship," which include the daily priestly activities in the holy place and the annual Day of Atonement ritual performed by the high priest alone (9:6–7). The author then identifies two problems with the old covenant. First, the earthly tabernacle symbolically indicates that access to the presence of God (represented by τῶν ἁγίων) remained closed while the old covenant system (represented by τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς) remained in place (9:8–9a). Second, the old covenant sacrifices were unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper since they relate only to external matters (9:9b–10). By contrast, the new covenant deals with the interior person and is able to bring forgiveness of sins (10:18) and cleansing of the conscience (9:14; 10:2, 22). The sanctuary and the sacrifices and their effect on the worshiper will be the main points of contrast with the new covenant.

Several aspects of Jesus' ministerial role in the new covenant are highlighted. First, Jesus serves in a superior sanctuary. The author contrasts

declares that a decision between the two "is not a critical one, for the author's real interest is in the distinction between the heavenly worship carried out by Jesus and that conducted on earth"; both terms refer to the heavenly realm (*Hebrews*, 199).

the sanctuaries of the old and new covenants in various ways. The old covenant sanctuary is “earthly” or “worldly” (κοσμικόν; 9:1); the new covenant sanctuary is “heavenly” (8:5; 9:23) and even heaven itself (9:24). The earthly sanctuary is handmade (χειροποίητα; 9:24), needing to be constructed (8:5; 9:2); the heavenly sanctuary is not handmade (9:11), but pitched by God (8:2), and does not belong to this creation (9:11). The earthly sanctuary is patterned or copied after the heavenly sanctuary, and is a mere shadow of it (8:5; 9:24). The heavenly sanctuary is “greater and [more] perfect” (μείζωνος καὶ τελειοτέρας; 9:11) and is the “real” or “genuine” (ἀληθινῆς; 8:2) sanctuary. The earthly sanctuary was a place of temporary access to God, and only for the high priest (9:7); Jesus has entered into the heavenly sanctuary permanently (9:12).

Second, Jesus performs a superior sacrifice that has superior results. The Levitical priests did not offer their own blood (9:25), but the blood of animals (9:12–13, 19; cf. 13:11) which are unable to take away sins (10:4; cf. 10:11); Jesus offered his own blood without blemish (9:14; cf. 13:12) which is able to take away sins (9:26). An implicit contrast is that animals are not willing subjects of their own sacrifice, but Jesus willingly offered himself as a sacrifice (9:26). Jesus’ willing obedience is made explicit in the quotation of Ps 39:7–9 LXX which is attributed to Jesus (10:5–10). Jesus thus exemplifies the inner obedience to the law, the law written on the heart, as mentioned in Jer 38:31–34 LXX. The old covenant sacrifices were able to effect an external cleansing of the flesh (9:13), but were unable to perfect the worshiper since they could not cleanse the consciousness of sins (10:1–3); Jesus’ sacrifice perfects and sanctifies the worshiper (10:10, 14) and performs an internal cleansing of the conscience in order to free people to serve God (9:14). The Levitical priests repeatedly had to offer sacrifices (9:6–7); Jesus performed his sacrifice once for all (9:12, 26–28; 10:10; cf. 7:27), obtaining *eternal* redemption (9:12). The fact that Jesus will return a second time *without* reference to sin indicates the permanent efficacy of his self-giving sacrifice (9:28). Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God, indicating the completion of his sacrificial role (10:12–13). The quotation from Ps 109:1 LXX, “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet,” indicates Jesus’ final vindication over his enemies, who will be completely subjected to him. As Hagner rightly notes, “This motif will become an important basis for exhortation in succeeding sections of the epistle (cf. vv. 25, 27, 35, 39; 12:28f.).”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Hagner, *Hebrews*, 160.

When the author describes Jesus as the “mediator” (μεσίτης) of a new covenant the second time, he elaborates on the means by which he enacts the new covenant. Jesus enacts the terms of this covenant through his own death (9:15–17). Much ink has been spilled over the question of whether διαθήκη in these verses means “covenant”¹¹⁶ or “testament, will.”¹¹⁷ But Attridge is probably correct when he says that the author is simply playing on the ambiguity of the term διαθήκη:

The innumerable attempts that have been made to find a single overarching concept of διαθήκη that can encompass the formulations of this entire section all ignore Hebrews’ obvious rhetorical conceit. The argument is simply that any διαθήκη (i.e., covenant) requires a death because no διαθήκη (i.e., testament) is valid until the testator dies.¹¹⁸

Jesus’ mediatorial role involves more than being an arbitrator or messenger of God’s contract. The covenant/testament also required the death of the testator, but since God cannot die, this became Jesus’ role. The verses

¹¹⁶ Ebrard, *Hebrews*, 294–95; J. Brown, *Hebrews*, 407–17; Frederic Gardiner, “On διαθήκη in Heb. ix. 16, 17,” *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 5 (1885): 8–19; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 300–304; Milligan, *Theology*, 152–53, 166–70; Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, 364–65; Marchant, “Sacrifice,” 204; K. M. Campbell, “Covenant or Testament?: Heb. 9:16, 17 Reconsidered,” *EvQ* 44 (1972): 107–11; Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation,” 308–18; John J. Hughes, “Hebrews IX 15ff. and Galatians III 15ff,” *NovT* 21 (1979): 28–66; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:242–43; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 77–79; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 313; Lucy Lincoln, “Translating Hebrews 9:15–22 in Its Hebraic Context,” *JOTT* 12 (1999): 1–29; Scott Hahn, “A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15–22,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 416–36; Cortez, “Anchor,” 362–69; Joslin, *Law*, 234n48; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 328–32; Allen, *Hebrews*, 477–81; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 404–7.

¹¹⁷ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:106–9; Eduard Riggenbach, “Der Begriff der ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ im Hebräerbrief,” in *Theologische Studien. Theodor Zahn zum 10. Oktober 1908* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1908); idem, *Hebräer*, 271; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 127–28; Leonard, *Authorship*, 76; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 139; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:262–63; Héring, *Hébreux*, 87; Vos, *Teaching*, 27–45; Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 203; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 156–57; James Swetnam, “A Suggested Interpretation of Hebrews 9:15–18,” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 373–90; Filson, *Yesterday*, 57; G. D. Kilpatrick, “Διαθήκη in Hebrews,” *ZNW* 68 (1977): 263–65; E. A. C. Pretorius, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Neot* 5 (1971): 44–45; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 151; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 368–71; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 190–92; Braun, *Hebräer*, 273; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 256–57; Culpepper, “High Priesthood,” 55; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 221–24; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:85–87; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:172–75; Strobel, *Hebräer*, 110; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 478–79; Lindars, *Theology*, 95–96; Witherington, “Influence of Galatians,” 147; Dunnill, *Covenant*, 250–51; J. S. Wiid, “The Testamental Significance of διαθήκη in Hebrews 9:15–22,” *Neot* 26 (1992): 149–58; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 462–64; Steven K. Stanley, “A New Covenant Hermeneutic: The Use of Scripture in Hebrews 8–10” (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1994), 141–46; Pfizner, *Hebrews*, 131; Long, *Hebrews*, 98–99; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 308–9; Koester, *Hebrews*, 417–18, 424–26; Scott R. Murray, “The Concept of διαθήκη in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *CTM* 66 (2002): 58; Hagner, *Encountering*, 123; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 136–37; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 240–41; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 188; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 189–90.

¹¹⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 254.

that follow (9:18–22) set out to demonstrate that even the inauguration of the first covenant required the shedding of blood.

10:19–39

Verses 10:19–25 form the second major “bridge paragraph” in Hebrews.¹¹⁹ It reiterates some of the themes of the central expository sections (5:1–10:18), while also anticipating the motifs of the concluding paraenetic sections (10:26–13:25). This section will begin to draw out the important implications that the character and work of Jesus has for the audience.

Jesus’ sacrificial death, as signified by the metonymic expressions of “blood” and “flesh,” has “inaugurated” (ἐνεκαίνισεν) a “new and living way” into the presence of God (10:19–20). The verb ἐγκαίνιζω was also used in 9:18 where it signified the inauguration of the first covenant. The language of the “way” is consistent with other metaphorical language used throughout the discourse. Jesus is the pioneer (2:10; 12:2) and forerunner (6:20) and high priest (4:14; 8:1; 9:11–12, 24) who has entered the heavenly realm and has helped to bring many children to glory (2:10). The audience was also urged to enter into God’s rest (4:1–11). Jesus’ sacrificial death enables the believer to enter fully into God’s presence, as indicated by the metaphors of the holy place (τῶν ἁγίων) and the veil (τοῦ καταπετάσματος; 10:19–20). In light of what Jesus has done, the believer can enter into God’s presence with boldness (παρρησίαν). The noun παρρησία recalls the earlier exhortations of 3:6 and 4:16. Attridge describes this quality as “an attitude of confidence that enables a free and unimpeded behavior before God and humankind.”¹²⁰

The author also draws implications from Jesus’ role as high priest (10:21). His designation as a “great” (μέγαν) priest recalls 4:14 where Jesus is described as the “great” (μέγαν) high priest who has entered into the heavenly realm. The phrase “over the house of God” (ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ) hearkens back to 3:5–6 where the author highlighted Jesus’ faithfulness. In light of Jesus’ faithfulness as high priest, the author admonishes his audience with a series of hortatory subjunctives (10:22–25). The three exhortations highlight the three Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love,

¹¹⁹ Longenecker, *Rhetoric*, 37. Scholars have long noted the similarities between 10:19–25 and 4:14–16. The two paragraphs share thematic elements such as the heavenly high priesthood of Jesus (4:14; 10:21), approaching God with confidence (παρρησία; 4:16; 10:19), and holding fast their confession (ὁμολογία; 4:14; 10:23).

¹²⁰ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 284.

which anticipate their more extended treatments, broadly speaking, in chapters 11, 12, and 13 respectively.

First, the author urges his audience to approach (προσερχώμεθα) God with sincerity (μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας)¹²¹ and confident faith (ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως; 10:22).¹²² This confidence is also based on the cleansing that they have received through Jesus' sacrifice (10:22; cf. 9:14).

Second, the author advises his audience to "hold fast" (κατέχωμεν) their confession of hope (τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος; 10:23). This language of holding fast recalls earlier instances of such exhortations (3:6, 14; 4:14). The language of confession, hope, and confidence is also found in these verses. The author encourages his audience to hold fast because "he who has promised is faithful" (10:23). This oblique reference probably refers to God and not Jesus since throughout the discourse the author usually identifies God as the one who gives promises (6:13–18; 8:6–12; 10:36–38; 11:11; 12:26). Thus, the author's exhortations are not based just on Jesus' character alone, but also on God's.

The third hortatory subjunctive enjoins the audience to consider (κατανοῶμεν) how to provoke one another to love and good deeds (10:24), which include the acts of assembling together and encouraging one another (10:25). These exhortations take on an added urgency in light of the approaching day. The "day" here probably is a reference the "Day of the Lord" or "Day of God," which is the final day of reckoning and judgment.¹²³ After all, the author was of the conviction that they were living in the "last days" (1:2).

The mention of the "day" steers the author into another warning to the readers (10:26–31). This passage is reminiscent of earlier warning passages (2:1–4; 6:4–6). Here again the passage seems to be speaking about believers who have fallen into disobedience; they have received the knowledge of the truth (10:26) and they have been sanctified by Jesus' blood (10:29). The author warns about the dangers of intentional sinning. There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins since they have rejected the one means by

¹²¹ Hughes explains that this expression means "with genuine singleness of purpose and dedication" (*Hebrews*, 410).

¹²² Note the parallel expression πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος in 6:11. The author makes a close connection between faith and hope in 11:1. Lane remarks that both "phrases are descriptive of the certainty and stability that are created in Christians as a result of the work of Christ and that enable them to remain loyal to him" (*Hebrews*, 2:286).

¹²³ Matt 7:22; 10:15; 11:22, 24; 24:36; Mark 13:32; Luke 10:12; 17:26, 30, 31; 21:34; John 6:39; Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:10, 12; Jude 6; Rev 6:17; 16:14.

which sins are forgiven. Instead, they can only expect judgment from God (10:27). The author employs an *a fortiori* argument, as he did in 2:1–4. If a person who disregarded the Mosaic law, received the penalty of death, how much greater punishment will fall upon the person who has rejected Jesus, the Son of God? (10:28–29). The author graphically describes the rejection of Jesus and his work as “trampling under foot” (καταπατήσας) the Son of God and regarding Jesus’ blood, which sanctifies, as common or unclean (κοινόν; 10:29). One tramples that which one considers completely worthless; the metaphor suggests they have completely denied the deity of Jesus.¹²⁴ God will judge the person who has rejected Jesus and the salvific works he performs (10:30–31).

As he has done previously (6:4–12) the author juxtaposes words of warning together with words of encouragement (10:32–34). Once again he turns to the current situation of his audience; he is confident of better things regarding his audience (6:9). He reminds them that they have endured hardships and sufferings and have showed solidarity with others who suffered similarly. Moreover, they even rejoiced at the confiscation of their property since they knew they had a more permanent possession. The audience’s endurance (ὑπεμείνατε; 10:32) anticipates the reference to Jesus’ endurance in the face of hostility and crucifixion (12:2–3). The audience experienced reproachs (ὀνειδισμοῖς) even as Jesus had (11:26; 13:13). They shared (κοινωνοί) in their fellow Christians’ suffering, even as Jesus shared (κεκοινωνήκεν; 2:14) in human weaknesses and experienced suffering (2:9–10). They showed sympathy (συνεπαθήσατε) to the prisoners, even as Jesus showed sympathy (συμπαθεῖσαι) with human weaknesses (4:15). Their joyful (μετὰ χαρᾶς) acceptance of the confiscation of their property and their expectation of something better anticipates Jesus’ enduring the cross for the sake of the joy that awaited him (12:2). Thus, the audience had engaged in many of the attitudes and behaviors that were exemplified in Jesus.

The author proceeds to another brief exhortation (10:35–39) which prepares for the lengthy encomium on the heroes of faith. He urges them not to throw away their confidence (παρρησίαν; 10:35). Here he states negatively what he states positively elsewhere (3:6). Holding on and not casting away one’s confidence will result in a great reward (10:35). He then remarks that the readers have need of endurance (ὑπομονῆς . . . ἔχετε χρεῖαν; 10:36). Apparently, endurance was a virtue that they had exhibited

¹²⁴ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 422.

in the past (10:32), but now they were wavering in their faith. He will again admonish them to “run with endurance” (12:1) and to endure discipline (12:7). Here the endurance is related to doing the will of God (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ). Thus, he encourages obedience to the will of God in his audience, a virtue that was also characteristic of Jesus (10:7, 9). Accomplishing the will of God will result in obtaining the promises (10:36). The motif of promise is prominent in the encomium on faith that follows (11:9, 11, 13, 17, 33, 39).

The author then offers a quotation modified from Hab 2:3–4 LXX (10:37–38). It is likely that the author intended this quotation to be an oblique reference to the second coming of Jesus (cf. 9:28). If so, the imminence of the return of Jesus becomes the motivation for believers to persevere in their faith. The righteous person is the one who lives by faith; he does not “shrink back” (ὑποστειλῆται), but perseveres. The author believes that the audience is not included among those who shrink back (οὐκ ἐσμέν ὑποστολής; 10:39). The quotation becomes the basis for the encomium on faith which follows.

11:7–40

The author embarks on a long encomium on faith which encompasses the entirety of chapter 11. The author defines faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). Faith evinces certainty in future and unseen realities. The author employs the rhetorical device of anaphora,¹²⁵ repeating πίστει eighteen times, to introduce the exemplars of faith from Israelite history.¹²⁶ The examples illustrate how faith demonstrates certainty in future (e.g., 11:8, 20, 22) and unseen realities (e.g., 11:3, 7, 13, 27). The heroes of Israel’s history demonstrated faith in yet-fulfilled promises (11:9, 11, 13, 17, 33, 39) and in heavenly realities (11:10, 11–16).

Each one of the exemplars “received approval” (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν) for their demonstration of faith. The verb μαρτυρέω appears in the passive voice four times (11:2, 4, 5, 39) with reference to the exemplars of faith, and only once in the active (11:4) when God is the subject. Hence, it is likely that the passives should be construed as divine passives. It is difficult to convey the meaning of the passive verbs into English. Through their faith they “were witnessed” or “were testified” by God, that is, they were commended

¹²⁵ Anaphora “is the repetition, with emphasis, of the same word or phrase at the beginning of several successive clauses” (Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 673).

¹²⁶ Verses 3–5, 7–9, 11, 17, 20–24, 27–31, 33.

or approved by God. Although only Abel (11:4) and Enoch (11:5) are explicitly identified as those who were approved, the fact that the verb appears at the beginning and end of the encomium (11:2, 39) indicates that this approval extends to all the heroes of faith identified.

Besides faith, the heroes exemplified other virtues which should be imitated by the current generation. These virtues are also the same virtues that characterized Jesus. Abel and Noah demonstrated righteousness by their deeds (11:4, 7), even as Jesus is a righteous king (1:8–9; 7:2). Noah exhibited reverence (εὐλαβηθείς), even as Jesus did (5:7). Abraham displayed obedience (ὑπήκουσεν; 11:8), even as Jesus did (5:8). Moses evinced endurance (11:27), even as Jesus did (12:2–3).

It is likely that some of the examples that the author adduces addressed the situation of his audience, who had experienced hardship and sufferings. Many of the Israelite heroes experienced hardship and persecution for their faith (11:35–38). The story of Moses, in particular, illustrates several instances of hardship and persecution (11:23–29). Moses considered the “reproach” (ὄνειδισμὸν) of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (11:26). The wording of this verse seems to reflect Ps 88:51–52 LXX where the Israelite people are called God’s “anointed.”¹²⁷ The “reproach” would be equivalent to the ill-treatment (συγκακουχεῖσθαι) of the Israelites in 11:25. Some scholars see some sort of identification or connection between the sufferings of the people of God and the sufferings of Jesus.¹²⁸ More likely, “Christ” refers to the person of Jesus. If so, then one or both of the following interpretations are most likely:¹²⁹ (1) Reproach *like* that endured by Christ: Moses endured the same type of reproach which Christ himself later suffered. His reproach was a prefiguring of the reproach of Christ.¹³⁰ (2) Reproach *for the sake of* Christ: As a prophet Moses anticipated or

¹²⁷ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 203; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, “The Reproach of the Messiah in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Studia evangelica vol. VII: Papers Presented to the Fifth International Congress on Biblical Studies Held at Oxford, 1973* (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 231; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 496; D’Angelo, *Moses*, 48; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 211; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:373; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 141; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 614; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 410; Koester, *Hebrews*, 502; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 301; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 241. D’Angelo and Isaacs have also detected an allusion to Ps 68:8, 10 LXX.

¹²⁸ Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, 401; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:358; Michel, *Hebräer*, 409; Morris, “Hebrews,” 126; D. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 240; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 311–12; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:373; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 301; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 432–33.

¹²⁹ Koester adopts both views (*Hebrews*, 502).

¹³⁰ Davidson, *Hebrews*, 228; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 203; Sowers, *Hermeneutics of Philo*, 118; Williamson, *Philo*, 473; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 216; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 496; Braun, *Hebräer*, 381; Bénéteau, *Hébreux*, 2:156; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 381; Victor (Sung-Yul) Rhee, “Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 11,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 336; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 317.

foresaw Christ the Messiah and embraced his reproach for himself.¹³¹ Just as Moses embraced the reproach of Christ, the author also later urges the audience to bear his reproach (13:13).

Each one of the Israelite heroes cited in this chapter is meant to be models of faith for the audience to follow. But the encomium on faith climaxes with Jesus, who is the ultimate model of faith (12:1–3).

12:7–29

The author uses the cloud of witnesses enumerated in chapter 11 as the motivation for the audience to endure in the Christian faith. Here the author returns to the theme of endurance which forms an inclusio around the chapter on faith (cf. 10:32, 36). The author employs a racing metaphor to emphasize the theme of endurance (12:1–2). The Christian faith is a race (ἀγῶνα; literally, a “contest” or “struggle”) that demands endurance (ὑπομονῆς) to complete it. The goal of the race is Jesus who is described as the pioneer (ἀρχηγόν) and perfecter of faith; he helps the believer both to begin and to complete the race of faith. Jesus is the ultimate exemplar of faith and endurance. Jesus endured the cross while despising its ignominy. Ultimately, Jesus attains his goal, sitting down at the right hand of God. Earlier, “sitting” signified the completion of his priestly role (10:12); here it signifies the completion of his race of faith. Jesus’ example of endurance becomes the motivation for the audience to endure in the faith. In 12:3 it is expressed negatively as not growing weary or losing heart (μὴ κάμῃτε ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν ἐκλυόμενοι).

The author then addresses the issue of endurance in the midst of suffering (12:4–13). Suffering is not necessarily a sign of God’s displeasure. The author reminds the audience that they are children of God, and as children, they will experience the discipline of God for their own good. While discipline is not a joyful experience when one is in the midst of it, it will produce holiness (12:10) and a righteousness characterized by peace (12:11) in the believer. In view of these ultimate goals, the author again urges them not to flag in their faith (12:12–13).

¹³¹ D’Angelo, *Moses*, 95–149; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 341; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 142–43; Buchanan, *Challenge from Zion*, 358; Allen, *Hebrews*, 560. Hanson takes a literal approach: Moses chose the reproach of the preexistent Christ who shared in the sufferings of God’s people in Egypt (“Reproach,” 233). Similarly, W. Manson says, “it is more in accordance with the writer’s general understanding of the Old Testament history to consider that what he means here is that the Christ, the pre-incarnate Son of God, was actually a participant in the events of the exodus, and Moses, when he made his great decision, *ipso facto* accepted and identified himself with the Christ’s sufferings” (*Hebrews*, 80).

Perhaps in light of verses 10–11 the author then urges his audience to pursue peace with all persons and holiness (12:14). The pursuit of holiness enables one to see the “Lord.” While some commentators take this as a reference to Jesus,¹³² the majority take it to refer to God,¹³³ but either one is a possibility.¹³⁴ The pursuit of holiness also includes the avoidance of those things that are not conducive to it. He urges the audience to be watchful (ἐπισκοποῦντες) so as to avoid falling short of the grace of God and allowing “the root of bitterness” to grow (12:15). The allusion to Deut 29:17 LXX warns against idolatry and turning away from God. They are also to avoid becoming an immoral and godless person such as Esau was (12:16). The negative example of Esau again reminds the audience of the impossibility of repentance for such persons (12:17).

In 12:18–24 the author presents a synkrisis contrasting the audience with the exodus generation (3:7–4:11). The exodus generation’s approach to God at Mount Sinai was accompanied by a terrifying theophany. By contrast, the current generation approaches Mount Zion where God resides along with all his glorious hosts. The catalog of the members of the heavenly realm climaxes with the figure of Jesus (12:24). Numerous items are contrasted between the experiences of the two mountains. First, various impersonal visual (fire, darkness, gloom, storm) and auditory (trumpets, voices) manifestations accompanied the theophany at Sinai. By contrast, heavenly Zion is populated by a host of personal beings (God, angels, assembly, people). Second, the fearful experience of Sinai (12:19, 21) is contrasted with the festive occasion of Zion (12:22).¹³⁵ Third, by implication the inapproachability to God at Sinai (12:18, 20) is contrasted with the approachability to God at Zion. Fourth, the leaders of the two covenants are contrasted. Even Moses, who was the leader of the Israelites under the old covenant, was full of fear (12:21). By contrast, Jesus, as the mediator of a new covenant (12:24), makes the blessings of the covenant available to his followers and enables them to approach God. A final contrast is presented between the blood of Jesus and the blood of Abel. While the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance, Jesus’ blood cries out for grace and reconciliation (12:24).

¹³² Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 387.

¹³³ E.g., Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:451; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 662; Koester, *Hebrews*, 531; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 473.

¹³⁴ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 367; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 277.

¹³⁵ The noun πανήγυρις implies a festal gathering.

The author concludes this section with a final warning about heeding “the one who is speaking” (τὸν λαλοῦντα; 12:25). The one who is speaking is most likely God. The expression forms a nice inclusio with the beginning of the book which introduces God as the one who speaks (ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας; 1:1). The author once again employs an *a fortiori* argument as he did in 2:1–4 and 10:28–29: “for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven!” (12:25). The argument contrasts two different things. First, there is a contrast between the former generation (ἐκεῖνοι) and the current generation (ἡμεῖς). Second, there is a contrast between the one who warns from earth versus the one who warns from heaven. Some identify the two speakers as Moses and Jesus,¹³⁶ others Moses and God,¹³⁷ while still others identify Jesus as the speaker in both instances.¹³⁸ Most commentators say that the speaker in both cases is God; the contrast instead is the modes of revelation.¹³⁹ This latter interpretation is certainly correct. The verb *χρηματίζω*, when it has the meaning of “to impart a revelation, injunction, or warning” is never used of human beings in the NT.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, God is the one who spoke to the Israelites at Sinai in 12:19. In 12:26 God’s voice shook the earth then, but now will shake heaven.¹⁴¹ The author interprets the quotation from Hag 2:6 to mean that God is going to remove all temporary things, those things that can be shaken, in order

¹³⁶ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 220; T. Robinson, *Hebrews*, 192; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 149; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 234; Sowers, *Hermeneutics of Philo*, 129; Michel, *Hebräer*, 471; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 398; Vanhoye, *Different Priest*, 396.

¹³⁷ Héring, *Hébreux*, 119; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 224; idem, *Zion*, 408; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 233.

¹³⁸ Feuillet, “Dialogue,” 157; Hanson, “Gospel,” 250; idem, “Christ in the Old Testament,” 403–5.

¹³⁹ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:355–56; Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 719–20; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 421; Windisch, *Hebräer*, 115; W. Manson, *Hebrews*, 148; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:410–11; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 202; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 240; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 379–80; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 363n193; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 556; Morris, “Hebrews,” 143; Braun, *Hebräer*, 441; Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, “The Warning Passages in Hebrews Part 5: The Failure to Heed His Speaking in Hebrews 12:25–29,” *BSac* 146 (1989): 72; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:220; H.-F. Weiss, *Hebräer*, 684–85; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:475; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 683; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3:328; Koester, *Hebrews*, 546; Smillie, “Speaking,” 283–87; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 334; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 493; Allen, *Hebrews*, 596; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 661–63.

¹⁴⁰ “*χρηματίζω*,” BAGD 885; see Matt 2:12, 22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Heb 8:5; 11:7. In two other instances in the NT it means “to bear a name, be called or named” (Acts 11:26; Rom 7:3).

¹⁴¹ Vanhoye, however, argues that it is Jesus who is speaking in 12:26 as well: “It is to the glorified Christ that the author ascribed at the beginning of his homily, the final upheaval of earth and the heavens: ‘Like a garment you will roll them up’ (Heb 1,12). Creator of heaven and earth as Son of God (1,10), the glorified Christ will be the eschatological judge of ‘the universe’ (Acts 17,31)” (*Different Priest*, 396). See also Hanson, “Gospel,” 250.

that the permanent things may remain (12:27). Hence, the author urges the audience to serve and worship God gratefully with reverence and awe (12:28). The sermon effectively ends at 12:29 with the reason for the reverence and awe: God is a consuming fire.

13:1–25

Chapter 13 does not have the sustained argumentative framework that is characteristic of the rest of the book. The chapter contains a series of seemingly unrelated exhortations and comments. 13:1–6 gives a series of assorted commands that could perhaps be summarized under the heading of “love”: hospitality, remembering prisoners, marriage, and money. In 13:7 the author tells them to remember their former leaders and to imitate their faith. 13:8 states gnominically that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” The statement appears to be unrelated to the rest of the context, but upon closer inspection some connection can be made. Jesus’ reliability and immutability can be contrasted with the temporality of the leaders who are no longer present in the Christian community (13:7). Similarly, Jesus’ constancy can also be contrasted with the vagaries of varied and strange teachings that were current at that time (13:9). Some of the teachings were apparently focused on the question of food.

In 13:10 the author employs “altar” metonymically to refer to the sacrificial death of Jesus. Jesus’ sacrifice is not a sacrifice that is to be eaten, much like the whole burnt offerings that were performed on the Day of Atonement (13:11). Just as the carcasses of the animals are burned outside the camp, so also Jesus was sacrificed outside the city gates (13:12). Jesus’ death effects the sanctification of his followers through the shedding of his blood. Because of Jesus’ sacrificial death, the author urges his audience to bear the reproach of Jesus (13:13). It appears to be a similar expression to “taking up one’s cross.”¹⁴² The call is to embrace the path of suffering; since they live in a transitory world, they should seek something more permanent (13:14).

The author proceeds with another quick succession of exhortations in 13:15–17. Just as Jesus offered praise to God in the midst of the congregation (2:12), now Jesus (δὲ αὐτοῦ) enables his followers to praise God (13:15). Just as Jesus proclaimed (ἀπαγγεῖλω) God’s name (2:12), so now his followers are commanded to confess (ὁμολογούντων) his name. In 13:16 the author urges them to do good and to share with others. In both verses

¹⁴² So Attridge, *Hebrews*, 399. See Mark 8:34; Matt 10:38; Luke 14:26–27.

(15–16) the author uses the language of sacrifice (θυσία). While the sacrifice of animals is no longer appropriate because of Jesus' final sacrifice, the author urges new types of sacrifices which are more characteristic of life under the new covenant. Finally, the author enjoins his audience to obey and submit to their leaders (13:17).

In the conclusion the author asks for prayer (13:18) and expresses his desire to be restored to the addressees soon (13:19). The benediction (13:20–21) contains two new items of interest for the characterization of Jesus. For the first time the author explicitly mentions the resurrection of Jesus. The author does not employ any of the standard words for resurrection (i.e., ἀνίστημι, ἐγείρω). The phrase ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν, meaning "brought up" or "brought back" from the dead, is more consistent with the exaltation language that is typical of Hebrews. The language also recalls 2:10 in which it says that God leads (ἀγαγόντα) many children to glory. For the first time Jesus is identified as "the great shepherd of the sheep." The metaphor suggests Jesus' leadership and spiritual caregiving. The adjective "great" implies that Jesus is greater than all other "shepherds." Although not made explicit, a contrast may be implied with the former (13:7) and current (13:17) leaders of the congregation mentioned earlier in the chapter. The mention of the blood of the shepherd evokes the image of the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (cf. John 10:11, 15). The believer's ability to do good things and to do what is pleasing to God is enabled (διὰ) by Jesus. The author concludes with some personal remarks and greetings (13:22–25).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHARACTERIZATION OF JESUS

Having looked at the role of the characterization of Jesus within the argument of Hebrews, we will conclude with an examination of the significance of the character of Jesus for his followers. Jesus' character is important for two basic reasons: (1) it produces many benefits for his followers; and (2) it induces certain obligations from his followers.

Benefits

Status and Privileges

Believers in some sense share in the same status and privileges as Jesus. As we have seen, Jesus is frequently identified as the "Son" (1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 5:5, 8; 7:28) or the "Son of God" (4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29). Believers are also called "sons" (2:10; 12:5–8) and "children" (2:13–14) in relation to God. Since

Jesus calls believers his “brothers” (2:11–12; cf. 2:17), by inference they are in some sense children of God. Jesus is identified as the “firstborn” (1:6). Believers who are “enrolled in heaven” are called the “church of the firstborn” (ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων; 12:23 NASB).¹⁴³ The plural πρωτοτόκων indicates that this designation describes believers directly and not believers as belonging to Jesus (in other words, it is not “the firstborn’s church”). Believers in a sense will share in the same privileged status as Jesus.

As Son of God and firstborn, Jesus is naturally the “heir of all things” (1:2) and he inherits a more excellent name than the angels (1:4). Believers, likewise, are “heirs of the promise” (6:17) who inherit “the promises” (6:12) and “salvation” (1:14). The promise consists of an “eternal inheritance” (9:15). Figures from Israelite history are used as examples: Noah became an “heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (11:7 NASB), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were “fellow heirs” of the same promise (11:9 NASB). Esau serves as a negative example of one who did not “inherit” the blessing because of his immorality and godliness (12:17). While the author does not make a direct connection between Jesus’ heirship and

¹⁴³ Scholars have construed the expression ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων along two main lines of interpretation. The first view takes the expression to refer to angels, who were created prior to human beings; see von Soden, *Hebräerbrief*, 101; Peake, *Hebrews*, 233; Seeberg, *Hebräer*, 138; MacNeill, *Christology*, 69; Käsemann, *Wandering*, 50; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:407–8; Jean Daniélou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* (trans. Salvator Attanasio; Baltimore: Helicon, 1958), 113; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 231. The second view takes the expression to refer to human beings in some manner. The qualifying phrase ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς aligns with other passages of Scripture which speak of believers, whose names are enrolled in heaven (Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). But the specific group designated has been of matter of much debate. It may refer to the OT saints such as those mentioned in chapter 11 (Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, 19, 415; Héring, *Hébreux*, 119; Flew, “Hebrews,” 85; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 342–43), deceased Christians who are now in heaven (W. J. Dumbrell, “The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect,” *EvQ* 48 [1976]: 157; Rissi, *Theologie*, 101; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 146–47; Son, *Zion*, 90n63), Christian believers on earth who are already enrolled in heaven (Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:350–52; B. Weiss, *Theology*, 219; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 417; Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 414–15; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 217; Bonsirven, *Hébreux*, 510–11; Médébielle, *Hébreux*, 365; Hewitt, *Hebrews*, 201; Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament* [SNTSMS 1; Cambridge: University Press, 1965], 97; Strathmann, *Hebräer*, 151; Lightfoot, *Jesus*, 239; Braun, *Hebräer*, 437; Wilson, *Hebrews*, 231; Hegermann, *Hebräer*, 260; Lindars, *Theology*, 115–16), the whole church in general (Morris, “Hebrews,” 142; Peterson, *Perfection*, 162; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 2:196; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 359; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 485–86), or all believers of both covenants (Helyer, *Prōtokos*, 15; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 548–49; Allen, *Hebrews*, 592; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 655). It is hard to be dogmatic about any of these positions since the author does not clarify what he means by the designation. The overall context suggests that the firstborn are included among the heavenly host, but since earthly believers are often said to have their names enrolled in heaven, they are likely included as well.

the believer's inheritance, it is clear that, as mediator of the new covenant, Jesus makes the eternal inheritance available to the believer through his death (9:15).¹⁴⁴

It seems that the reason why believers can share in the same privileged status as Jesus is that he was made "like his brothers" in all things (2:17), and that he partakes of the same "flesh and blood" as fellow believers (2:14). Jesus demonstrated his solidarity with humanity. In turn, believers are described as "partakers of" or "partners with" Christ (3:14). This mutual solidarity implies that believers share in some of the same privileges that Jesus does.

David Hay suggests a relationship between the believer's rest and the heavenly session of Jesus. He notes the correspondence between the "rest" which God entered (4:4) and the "rest" which believers should strive to enter (4:11). He adds that Jesus' session in 10:12–13 and 12:2 "is interpreted above all as a resting after the completion of his earthly task."¹⁴⁵ Since Jesus is depicted as the model of faith for believers, it is reasonable to conclude that his exaltation, which is depicted as a reward for his faithfulness, is also a reward awaiting his followers.

As we have seen, "High Priest" is one of the most prominent titles used for Jesus throughout Hebrews (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1, 3; 9:11, 25). Although believers are never identified as "priests" in Hebrews, priestly language is used of believers.¹⁴⁶ One of the most important functions of priests was to offer sacrifices (5:1, 3; 7:27; 8:3; 10:11), but the necessity of these sacrifices is nullified by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus (7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:12). Nevertheless, the audience *is* urged to offer sacrifices of praise (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) to God (13:15). Moreover, doing good and sharing are described as sacrifices that are well pleasing to God (13:16). The

¹⁴⁴ Hugolinus Langkammer directly connects the heirship of Jesus to his followers: "Die Erbschaft Christi dehnt sich auch auf seine 'Brüder' aus, da sie durch ihn Söhne Gottes geworden sind (2,10; 12,5–8)"; see his article, "Den er zum Erben von allem eingesetzt hat" (Hebr 1,2)," *BZ* 10 (1966): 273.

¹⁴⁵ Hay, *Glory*, 95–96. See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 128; McKelvey, *Pioneer*, 45.

¹⁴⁶ Scholer does state that "Precisely because this high priest was a 'Son' and also a 'brother' (e.g. 2.10–18), his high priestly lineage also had a bearing on his 'brothers'. By virtue of their relatedness to the high priest, they are entitled to be 'priests' also" (*Proleptic Priests*, 11). Scholer calls this a "proleptic priesthood" since the privileges of priesthood are not fully realized in this life: "Believers are already enjoying access to God and offering sacrifices of praise, worship, and thanksgiving since the end-time days are here (e.g. 1.2; 9.26), and all the while they are anticipating the eschatological future when full and direct access will be enjoyed" (*Proleptic Priests*, 205). See, however, the critique of Marie E. Isaacs, "Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *HeyJ* 38 (1997): 58–59.

ritual sacrifice of animals is now replaced by these spiritual sacrifices. The believer's service to God is also described with liturgical language (λατρεύω; 9:14; 12:28; cf. 9:9; 10:2; 13:10).¹⁴⁷

Priests were given privileged access to the presence of God in the OT. Scholer points out that the verb ἐγγίζω was often used in the LXX to connote cultic approach to God (Exod 3:5; 24:2; Lev 10:3) or priestly access (Exod 19:22; Lev 21:21, 23; Ezek 40:46; 42:13; 43:19; 44:13; 45:4).¹⁴⁸ Jesus now brings in a "better hope" by which believers can draw near (ἐγγίζομεν) to God (7:19). Similarly, the verb προσέρχομαι may connote the cultic approach to God (e.g., Lev 9:7–8; 21:17–18, 21, 23; Ezek 44:16).¹⁴⁹ Through Jesus believers are now granted the privilege of drawing near to God (4:16; 7:25; 10:22; 12:22). Finally, the verb εἰσέρχομαι is frequently used for the entry of the priest into the tabernacle (e.g., Exod 29:30; 33:8–9; 34:35; 40:35; Lev 9:23; 16:3, 23; Num 4:5, 20; 8:15, 22, 24; 17:23) or temple (e.g., 2 Chr 23:6, 19; 26:16–17; 27:2; 29:16; 30:8; Hos 9:4; Ezek 42:14; 44:3, 9, 16). Jesus now has entered into the holy place (9:12, 24), the heavenly realm, where he becomes our forerunner (6:20). The fact that Jesus is designated "forerunner" adumbrates the believer's privileged access into the presence of God.¹⁵⁰

Soteriological Benefits

The benefits derived from Jesus' character can best be discerned through the multifarious soteriological language that is used throughout the book. Since this language was dealt with at length in chapter four, only brief mention of all the benefits will be made here. Much of the soteriological language revolves around Jesus' death. Jesus' identification with and likeness to humanity (2:9–18), his sinless nature (4:15; 7:26–27), and his willing obedience to God (10:5–10) made Jesus the perfect sacrifice for human sin (7:27; 9:14, 26; 10:10, 12, 14). He experienced death for the benefit of all people (2:9). His death was the means to render the devil powerless over death (2:14), and to deliver humanity from the fear of death (2:15). Through his sacrifice Jesus made atonement for sins (2:17) by bearing (9:28), removing (9:26), forgiving (10:17–18), and cleansing (1:3) sins, and cleansing

¹⁴⁷ Nelson, "Priesthood," 151.

¹⁴⁸ Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 117–18.

¹⁴⁹ Robert J. Daly, "The New Testament Concept of Christian Sacrificial Activity," *BTB* 8 (1978): 105–6; idem, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 72; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 133–37; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 127–28, 134.

¹⁵⁰ Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 177.

consciences (9:14; 10:22; cf. 10:2). As the “author” (2:10) and “source” (5:9) of salvation, Jesus brings permanent salvation (5:9; 7:25; 9:28) and redemption (9:12) to believers. Jesus’ sacrifice also sanctifies believers (2:11; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). Since Jesus was perfected (5:9; 7:28) through suffering (2:10), he is able to perfect believers (9:9; 10:14; 12:2 cf. 10:1; 12:23).

As a leader and pioneer (2:10; 12:2), Jesus is a forerunner (6:20; possibly 4:10), entering into the heavenly realm into the presence of God (9:12, 24). With this privileged position at the right hand of God, Jesus is able to give aid to believers in a variety of ways. Since Jesus was human and experienced human weakness and temptation, he can sympathize with humanity (4:15), help those who are tempted (2:18), and intercede for them (7:25). Jesus also “takes hold” of humanity (2:16) and helps lead them to glory (2:10).

Obligations

Model of Imitation

Jesus’ exemplary character is a model of imitation for his followers. Although imitation language is only used explicitly twice in regard to human beings (6:12; 13:7), it is clear in some places that believers are urged to follow the example of Jesus (5:8–9; 12:1–3).¹⁵¹ More generally, however, many of the character traits that Jesus exemplified are also character traits that are expected from his followers.

Jesus is the “king of righteousness” (7:2) whose reign is characterized by righteousness (1:8–9). Jesus is also the “king of peace” (7:2). Mature believers are expected to be acquainted with righteousness (5:13). The righteous person lives by faith (10:36) as exemplified by Abel (11:4) and Noah (11:7). Other Israelite heroes performed “acts of righteousness” (11:33 NASB). Part of the heavenly host is described as the “spirits of the righteous made perfect” (12:23). Believers who are trained by discipline produce the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (12:11). Believers are also urged to pursue peace with all persons (12:14).

Jesus was without sin (4:15; 7:26) or blemish (9:14). The author warns his audience about the dangers of sinning willfully (10:26). Believers are not to be “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (3:13), and to avoid the sinful example of the exodus generation (3:17) and the immoral and godless example of Esau (12:17). Instead, they are to “lay aside” (12:1) and

¹⁵¹ Talbert, for example, says, “Jesus’ endurance/obedience/faith in the midst of adversity furnishes a model for Christians to follow” (*Suffering*, 67); see also MacNeill, *Christology*, 24.

to “struggle against” sin (12:4). Moses, one of the exemplars of faith, chose to endure ill-treatment rather than to enjoy the temporary “pleasures of sin” (11:25). Believers are disciplined so that they can share in God’s holiness (12:10). In the concluding chapter the author advises his audience to keep the marriage relationship undefiled (13:4) and to be free from the love of money (13:5).

Jesus is a faithful high priest (2:17) whose faithfulness surpasses that of Moses’ (3:2–6). Believers are urged to avoid the unfaithful example of the exodus generation (3:12, 19). Jesus was also a merciful high priest (2:17) who is able to sympathize (συμπαθεῖν) with human weakness (4:15). He enables believers to draw near to God to find mercy and grace. He shows compassion towards human beings by helping them (2:18) and interceding for them (7:25). Similarly, believers should show compassion towards other people. The author praises his audience that they have manifested love in their service to the saints (6:10). He also praises them for their sharing in the sufferings of others and for their showing sympathy (συνεπαθήσατε) to the prisoners (10:33–34). In the final chapter the author enjoins several commands on the audience to demonstrate brotherly love (13:1), to show hospitality (13:2), and to remember the prisoners and those who are mistreated (13:3). In 13:16 he urges them to do good deeds and to share.

Jesus’ piety (εὐλαβείας) and devotion that he displayed through the singing of hymns to God (2:12) and through fervent prayer (5:7) can be paralleled with the author’s command to the audience to offer up continually a sacrifice of praise to God and to confess his name (13:15). Noah displayed reverence (εὐλαβηθεὶς) when he built the ark (11:7). Similarly, Jesus’ trust in God likely serves as a model for believers to follow in view of Jesus’ solidarity with them (2:13).¹⁵²

Jesus’ life was characterized by obedience (5:8; 10:7, 9). Likewise, obedience should characterize the life of the believer (5:9). The author warns about following the disobedient example of the exodus generation who failed to enter into their rest (3:18; 4:6, 11). Those who were disobedient to the law were punished (2:2), and in Rahab’s time the disobedient perished (11:31). By contrast Abraham displayed obedience by setting out to an unknown land (11:8). Obedience and submission should also be paid to spiritual leaders as well (13:17).

¹⁵² So also, Terveen, “Jesus in Hebrews,” 65; McCruden, “Christ’s Perfection,” 47. Attridge says, “Christ here declares that he will endeavor to exemplify the fidelity to which all in the assembly will be called in various exhortations throughout the work” (“Liberating,” 114).

Jesus displayed endurance in bearing with the pain and humiliation of the cross and the hostility of sinners against himself (12:2–3). Similarly, believers are called to endurance (10:36; 12:1) so that they can receive their reward. Believers should evince endurance when they are disciplined (12:7), for it will result in godly character (12:10–11). Moses exemplified endurance in choosing ill-treatment rather than the pleasures of sin (11:25). The author enjoins the similar virtue of patience upon his readers so that they may obtain the promises (6:12, 15).

The similarities between the language used about Jesus and that used about believers do not appear to be accidental. Believers are called to emulate in their own lives many of the character traits that Jesus exemplified in his life.

Warning

Jesus' character serves as a warning to his followers to avoid disobedience and unbelief. The character of Jesus is the basis for the emotional appeals (*pathos*) that the author utilizes throughout his discourse. The opening chapters are particularly important for setting up the character of Jesus for the whole discourse. The exordium (1:1–4) and synkrisis (1:5–14) of chapter 1 serve to characterize the divinity of Jesus. Included among the important character traits are his eternality, immutability, authority, and power. These character traits demand allegiance and obedience from all of humanity. Human beings need to heed Jesus as their creator, but also as one who has the authority and power to effect punishment on those who reject him. Chapter 2 highlights Jesus' solidarity with humanity and his sacrificial self-giving on behalf of humanity. Such character traits should evoke trust, respect, and gratefulness on the part of all people.

The *pathos* of fear is one of the most important emotional appeals that the author employs, as is evident in the numerous warning passages interspersed throughout the discourse (2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 6:4–8; 10:26–31; 12:15–17, 25–29).

The first warning passage (2:1–4) comes on the heels of the opening synkrisis that served to characterize Jesus as superior to the angels as the agent of God's revelation. Hence, disobedience to the revelation given through the Son will incur a greater punishment than disobedience to the revelation given through the angels. The greater the agent of revelation, the greater is the danger in not heeding the message that the agent reveals.

In 6:4–6 the author warns that persons who have experienced fully the blessings of the Christian life and then turn away from them in effect

has crucified Jesus anew and has publicly disgraced him. Such persons in effect have despised and rejected the person of Jesus and his sacrificial self-offering on their behalf. Repentance is not available for such persons because they have rejected the one means by which repentance is made available. Similarly, in 10:26–29 the Christian who continues to sin willfully is in effect trampling Jesus under foot and is regarding his sacrifice as worthless. Such persons will incur a more severe punishment than those who disregarded the law of Moses. Those who trample Jesus under foot may find that one day they will themselves become a footstool for Jesus' feet (1:13; 10:13). One's relationship to the person of Jesus will have important consequences for one's eternal destiny.

Encouragement

Jesus' character serves as encouragement for his followers to hold on to their faith and to move forward in their Christian life. Alongside the *pathos* of fear the author utilizes the *pathos* of encouragement. Often the author places words of encouragement (4:14–16; 6:9–12; 10:19–25, 32–39; 12:22–24) alongside warning passages.

The author uses a plethora of confidence/assurance terminology: *παρρησία* (3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35), *ὑπόστασις* (3:14; 11:1), *πληροφορία* (6:11; 10:22); *καύχημα* (3:6); *ἐλπίς* (3:6; 6:11, 18; 7:19; 10:23; 11:1). This confidence is based on Jesus' various character traits.¹⁵³ Jesus' eternity and immutability imply the permanency and constancy of Jesus' actions on behalf of humanity. His power and authority indicate that Jesus is able to accomplish whatever he promises to humanity. His mercy and faithfulness indicate that he has the best interests of humanity in mind and that he can be trusted.

This confidence in Jesus' character is manifested in a variety of ways. First, the author encourages his audience to maintain their faith. He states this positively by using two synonymous verbs to convey the idea of holding fast to their faith: *κατέχω* (3:6, 14; 10:23) and *κρατέω* (4:14; 6:18). He also states this negatively by urging them not to "throw away" (*ἀποβάλητε*) their confidence (10:35 NASB), nor should they "shrink back" (*ὑποστολῆς*; 10:39), nor "grow weary" (*χάμητε*) and "lose heart" (*ἐκλυόμενοι*; 12:3).

Second, the author urges his audience to exert effort and to strive towards maturity in their faith. They are to show diligence (*σπουδῇ*).

¹⁵³ James Thompson similarly asserts: "Whether the author describes Christ as high priest, son, or pioneer, christological reflection in Hebrews serves for the attainment of certainty"; see "The Underlying Unity of Hebrews," *ResQ* 18 (1975): 133.

for the full realization of their hope (6:11) and to hasten (σπουδάσωμεν) to enter into God's rest (4:11). They are to move towards maturity (ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα; 6:1), and to run the Christian race of faith with endurance (12:2).

Third, the author encourages his audience to approach God boldly in worship. Under the old covenant the worshiper did not approach God lightly because of the inability of animal sacrifices to cleanse the conscience (9:8–10; 10:1–4). Under the new covenant Jesus, through the sacrifice of himself, has perfected the worshiper (10:14) by cleansing the conscience (9:14; 10:22), and enabling the worshiper to approach with boldness (10:19–20). Just as Jesus was perfected in his vocational role as high priest, so now believers are perfected in their vocational role as worshipers.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the fact that Jesus sympathizes with the weakness of humanity (4:15) and is now interceding (7:25) for them in the heavenly realm, gives the worshiper an additional reason why he can now draw near with boldness to the throne of grace (4:16). Todd Still exclaims that “because Jesus is a tested, yet trustworthy, high priest, not only can they boldly approach the Son's heavenly throne of grace expecting mercy, but they can also approach God through him and anticipate acceptance (see 4:14–16; 7:19, 25; 10:19–22).”¹⁵⁵ Hence, we see that the author uses Jesus' character to encourage his audience in a variety of ways.

¹⁵⁴ Peterson, *Perfection*, 166, 175.

¹⁵⁵ Still, “Christos,” 750.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

SUMMATION OF THIS STUDY

This study has attempted to accomplish three things. First, it has sought to identify the literary and rhetorical devices that the author of Hebrews used to construct his characterization of Jesus. Second, it has tried to reconstruct the resulting portrait of Jesus that emerges from the author's characterization. Third, it has attempted to demonstrate how the author's characterization of Jesus was important for his argument.

Chapter one tried to situate this study within the context of prior christological, rhetorical, and narrational studies in the book of Hebrews. There have been many valuable studies that have taken a variety of approaches (e.g., descriptive, *traditionsgeschichtliche*, *religionsgeschichtliche*, comparative) that have illuminated the Christology of Hebrews. Methodologically, this study differs from previous studies in a couple of important ways. First, it attempts a comprehensive analysis of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews, that is, it seeks to uncover the author's portrayal of the "personality" of Jesus that lies behind his many christological statements. While some previous studies have highlighted some important character traits of Jesus in Hebrews, there has never been an attempt at a thoroughgoing examination of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. Second, this study employs the tools of literary and primarily rhetorical criticism to reconstruct the character of Jesus in Hebrews. While there have been numerous studies on Hebrews that have employed rhetorical criticism, most of these studies have focused on such things as the vocabulary, style, rhythm, and rhetorical structure of Hebrews. While a few of these studies have highlighted some important rhetorical devices that the author of Hebrews employs, there has never been a thorough analysis of all of these devices and how they are used by the author to construct his portrait of Jesus. In recent years a growing number of scholars have recognized that Hebrews assumes a particular story world behind its discourse. Some studies have employed the tools of literary criticism in their analysis of Hebrews, but surprisingly little has been done to analyze Jesus as one of the major characters in this story world. This study seeks to fill this lacuna.

Chapters two and three prepared the theoretical and methodical groundwork for the study of the characterization of Jesus in Hebrews. Chapter two began the survey of characterization in literary theory by offering a set of definitions for *character*. *Character* was defined as *a construct of the totality of traits and attributes belonging to a particular human or non-human figure in a given story*. A secondary definition is derivative from the first: *a character refers to the literary figure which is the locus of the totality of these traits and attributes*. It is important to note that any reconstruction of a literary character is only an approximation that must be derived from the textual clues that an author gives in his or her construction of the character. The definition of *character* included both “personality” traits (that is, the intellectual, moral, and social qualities of a literary figure) and “external” or “environmental” attributes (such as age, gender, physical appearance, ethnicity, social location etc.) since both contribute to a comprehensive portrait of a literary figure.

The study of character(s) falls along two main lines: the classification of different character types and the analysis of characterization techniques employed by authors. The survey on the classification of characters revealed a proliferation of terminology used to categorize characters according to specific types. At the end of the day, such classifications are not particularly helpful since characters tend to fall along a spectrum rather than in hard and fast categories. Exceedingly more fruitful is analyzing the characterization techniques employed by authors to construct their characters.

Characterization techniques generally tend to fall along two basic approaches: direct presentation (or *telling*) and indirect presentation (or *showing*). In direct presentation the narrator comments directly on a character. In indirect presentation the narrator displays the character's traits through a variety of means. Authors can identify “external” or “environmental” attributes such as names, title, age, gender, physical appearance, habitual posture and expression, clothing, possessions, surroundings, socio-economic status, nationality or ethnicity, occupation, and/or educational background. Authors can reveal characters through their actions, speech, and inner life (thoughts, emotions, and motives). Authors can also reveal characters through apposition with other characters, whether through the kinds of associations a character keeps; through the actions, speech, and thoughts/emotions of other characters; and through comparison and contrast of characters to one another or to themselves. A variety of literary tropes (metaphors, similes, personification, irony etc.) may

also be used in the construction of characters. These various means of revealing character fall along a spectrum of explicitness and certainty for the reader to reconstruct the character of a given literary figure.

Although it is possible to reconstruct the character of Jesus in Hebrews entirely from modern narrative techniques, this study tried to root these techniques in ancient theory and practice. The investigation into ancient historiography, biography and drama revealed that indeed techniques of direct and indirect presentation were utilized in a variety of ancient literary genres. Such techniques of characterization, however, might be called into question by Malina's and Neyrey's contention that ancient persons had a dyadic personality, that is, they derived their identity, not in terms of individuality, but in terms of the group of which they were a part, and that their personality was deemed to be fixed and immutable. While Malina and Neyrey have helpfully clarified how ancient persons conceived personality differently from modern persons, it seems that they have overstated their case. The investigation into the actual practice of ancient literary works reveals a far more complex scenario. It seems that ancient persons had far more psychological interest in individual personality than is generally assumed. Ancient authors were quite capable of producing complex and dynamic characters. Despite the apparent use of characterization techniques in ancient literature, however, it seems that ancient theories of characterization were not highly developed as evidenced by the works of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. This study contends that ancient theories of characterization were well-developed, not in ancient literary theory, but in ancient rhetorical theory.

Chapter three began with an investigation into the rhetorical genre of Hebrews. Hebrews evinces features of both epideictic and deliberative types of rhetoric, but it appears that the epideictic rhetoric is serving the deliberative purpose of the discourse. The author praises Jesus in order to encourage his audience to adopt certain attitudes and behaviors that are conducive to living a successful Christian life.

Chapter three explored in depth the various rhetorical techniques that orators could use to develop the characterization of a person. First and foremost was the use of encomiastic topics. All of the Greek and Roman handbooks, without exception, provide some sort of listing of the properties of persons. While differences certainly exist among the many lists provided by the rhetorical handbooks, two basic types of lists are apparent. First, there are the epideictic lists which generally arrange their topics around the headings of external goods, the goods of the body, and the

goods of the mind (or by similar such designations). The goods of the mind are the most praiseworthy since they correspond to moral virtues which are displayed in a person's deeds and words. External goods and the goods of the body are bestowed upon a person by fortune or nature and hence are less praiseworthy since these goods are usually beyond a person's control. It is how a person responds to the presence or absence of these goods that truly reveals a person's character. Virtues that benefit others are more praiseworthy than virtues that only give honor to the individual. The second type of lists is simply a straight listing of the various attributes or properties of a person from which an orator may draw arguments.

Many of the handbooks prescribed treating these topics in a particular order when constructing encomia. However, it appears that the author of Hebrews does not neatly follow the arrangement of these topic lists in his own praise of Jesus. The author did not simply check off a list of attributes while composing his encomium on Jesus. Nevertheless, it is highly likely, given his rhetorical skill, that the author was acquainted with rhetorical theory and would have been familiar with such encomiastic topic lists, even though he did not feel constrained to follow such lists rigidly. In this respect the book of Hebrews seems to resemble most closely the type of speech which Menander identifies as a "talk" (λαλιά). In this type of speech an orator does not follow a prescribed arrangement but discusses his subject matter in the order most suitable for his purposes. Moreover, the λαλιά exhibits characteristics of both deliberative and epideictic genres, and hence seems to correspond nicely with the type of rhetoric displayed in Hebrews.

A second common technique used by orators to reveal character was amplification and minimization. When praising a person, orators would magnify the person's strengths and virtues, while downplaying the person's weaknesses and shortcomings. Orators could also employ a variety of other techniques to reveal character including synkrisis, commonplaces, vivid descriptions, chreiae, attributed speech, and literary tropes. Orators could also appeal to the testimony of the gods or other people to add authoritative weight to their characterization of persons. Chapter three concluded with a synthesis demonstrating the affinities between modern literary theory and ancient rhetorical theory. While the techniques of characterization vary slightly between the two methodologies, the correlation between the two is quite striking. The synthesis also briefly illustrated how the author of Hebrews utilizes the various techniques in his own construction of Jesus' character.

Chapter four presented a comprehensive reconstruction of the author's portrayal of the character of Jesus in Hebrews. The presentation was arranged around the encomiastic topics that the author *does* use in his construction of Jesus' character: names, nature, origin, education, titles/offices, speech/utterances, actions/events, and death. The author does not utilize all of the encomiastic topics identified from the rhetorical handbooks, but only those topics which were most suitable to his purpose. The author of Hebrews uses numerous titles which reveal various aspects of Jesus' character (e.g., his divinity, authority, or reliability). Most importantly, the author gives a great deal of attention to Jesus' words and deeds since these things best disclose Jesus' character. The author also uses the rhetorical device of amplification, particularly in reference to the selflessness of Jesus' self-sacrifice and the beneficence and permanent efficacy of his salvific death. Synkrisis features prominently throughout Hebrews as the author demonstrates the superiority of Jesus through comparison to the prophets, angels, Moses, and the Levitical priests. The author uses literary tropes and other rhetorical devices in abundance to reveal the character of Jesus. Finally, the author invokes the testimony of God, most prominently at the beginning of his discourse, to give authoritative support to his portrayal of Jesus' character.

Chapter four concluded with a summation of all of the character traits that emerged out of the analysis of the author's characterization of Jesus. The author of Hebrews depicts Jesus as a person of exemplary character. Jesus exhibits both divine and human character traits. Some of the traits reveal Jesus' greatness (e.g., eternity, immutability, power, and authority), while others reveal his moral excellence (e.g., dependability, faithfulness, mercy, beneficence, piety, obedience, holiness, humility, and endurance). Jesus' exemplary character plays a prominent role in the author's argument and has profound implications for his audience.

Since the reconstruction of character is a cumulative process for the reader, chapter five attempted a sequential reading of Hebrews indicating how the author's emerging portrait of Jesus was important for the development of his argument. The chapter tried to show how the author builds up his portrait of Jesus by evoking earlier statements he made about Jesus in the discourse and by anticipating later stages in his argument. The chapter concluded with an overview of the significance of Jesus' character for the audience of Hebrews. First, Jesus' character produces many benefits for his followers. In some sense, believers share in the same status and privileges that Jesus has (e.g., sonship, heirship, priestly privileges). Jesus' exemplary character also produces many soteriological blessings for his

followers. Second, his character entails certain obligations from his followers. Jesus' exemplary character is a model of imitation for his followers. The author frequently urges his audience to exemplify virtues that are also characteristic of Jesus. Jesus' character also serves as a caution for his followers to avoid disobedience and unbelief. Finally, Jesus' character serves as encouragement for his followers to persevere and mature in their faith, and to approach God boldly in worship.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has offered a new methodological approach to the study of the Christology of Hebrews. This study attempted to illuminate the Christology of Hebrews through the lens of characterization by means of literary and rhetorical criticisms. This study opens up possibilities for further research both in Hebrews and in other early Jewish and Christian literature.

The study of characterization has been fruitfully applied to narrative genres in the NT, such as the gospels and Acts, through the tools of narrative criticism. By contrast, the study of characterization in non-narrative genres, such as the epistles, has been rather limited. The reason for this is that scholars have been reluctant to apply the tools of narrative criticism to non-narrative genres. As this study demonstrates, however, even non-narrative genres often assume a story world behind their discourses. Scholars can reconstruct the story world behind non-narrative genres and thus determine the characters in those story worlds. Hence, narrative criticism may be fruitfully applied to non-narrative genres as well. But, as this study has demonstrated, the examination of characterization could also be fruitfully applied to non-narrative genres through the tools of rhetorical criticism.

First, one could do further exploration of characterization in the book of Hebrews. One could, for example, examine the rhetorical devices used to develop the character of God in Hebrews and ascertain the resulting picture of God's character in Hebrews and its implications for the author's argument. One could also examine the characterization of the audience of Hebrews and determine how the author's conception of his audience shaped the way he formulated his argument. One could also conceivably develop a characterization of the author himself, but in a more limited way, since mostly what we have in Hebrews is the author's "speech." We have very little in the way of autobiographical material in Hebrews.

Second, the same methodology used in this study could be applied to other non-narrative literature in the NT such as the Pauline and General Epistles, as well as in other early Christian literature such as the Apostolic Fathers. One could examine Christology in other early Christian literature through the lens of characterization.

Third, more attention could be given to examining how the NT authors in general utilize various rhetorical devices in constructing arguments. While rhetorical criticism has focused much on the vocabulary, style, and rhetorical structure of NT writings, less work has been done on the use of rhetorical devices.

In conclusion, this study has attempted to make a contribution to our understanding of the theory and practice of characterization in ancient rhetoric. By understanding how characterization functioned in ancient rhetorical theory and practice we can gain new insights into the techniques that the author of Hebrews used to develop his portrait of Jesus, the resulting portrait that emerges, and the significance of that portrait for the author's argument.

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